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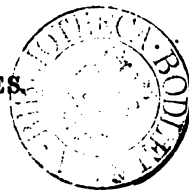


THE  
MARRIAGE CONTRACT.

BY HARRIET RAIKES.

• That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that  
which is wanting cannot be numbered.—ECCLESIASTES.

IN TWO VOLUMES.  
VOL. I.




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TO THE AUTHOR  
OF  
ELLEN MIDDLETON,  
THIS STORY  
IS  
AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED  
BY  
HARRIET RAIKES.







THE  
MARRIAGE CONTRACT.

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CHAPTER I.

He knows little of the world, who has only seen its brightest side.

My mother drew herself languidly into a corner of the carriage, and said with her quiet voice: "Aux Bouffons." "Aux Bouffons," I repeated louder and gaily, as I sprang into the seat beside her: and Lismore, taking his place in front of us, and shuddering at the cold, pulled up the glass, while the carriage rolled out of the court, and turned towards the Boulevards.

The Théâtre Favart, to which we were bound that evening, was burnt to the ground on the 13th of January, 1838. There has been nothing since so perfect of its kind. It was more like a drawing-room than a playhouse, light without glare, and had always a good audience, but no crowd. The places were well distributed; everybody well dressed, and generally well known in it. The singers and the company seemed to understand each other, and take a mutual interest in the evening. How many recollections of my youth, swept away in that conflagration, now own no longer a locality. The most constant frequenters of the "Salle Favart," seemed as if they had dispersed after the fatal event. The Italians for some time sang in one of the unoccupied theatres; and then another house was arranged and decorated for "the Bouffons," but it ceased to be called by that name; and never assumed the same air as the one that had been the exclusive domain of the fashion and the dilettanti of Paris. This

evening I was in high spirits, and my impatience was with difficulty restrained, for we were late.

I hurried my mother and Lismore across the vestibule and along the stone passage that led to our box upon the stage, threw my cloak to the ouvreuse, and before they had established themselves, was in my own place, with my elbows on the front of the box, and my head bent forward to the scene: it was to me the world. They sang the "Otello," and my favourite trio in the first act: "Ti parli Amor" was coming on. Soon I fell into a dream of enchantment. Everything but the singers and their representation had vanished from my perceptions, my senses were lost in ideal life. Only during one short interval, glancing by chance from the stage towards my mother, my eyes met hers, fixed on me with a fond though laughing sympathy in an enjoyment so absorbed. Lismore had directed her attention to me, and she was in the act of replying to the

amusement he had just expressed. I laughed too, leant forwards to kiss affectionately the hand she held out, and resumed immediately afterwards my interest in the "Otello."

That opera came, like all pleasures, to its close. Desdemona's frantic struggle ended; her last cry was uttered; she had scuffled off the stage. My mother tapped me on the shoulder, and Lismore held the cloak which she stayed to tie carefully over my throat. We had to wait a good while before we could get away. At that time I was not out in the world; the Italian opera was my only dissipation; the company was nothing to me. Standing amidst currents of air and a crowd of passing figures, I had no interest but that of seeing who bustled away before our turn came, and of listening to the greetings that, in common with remarks and interjections of various kinds, were exchanged amongst the bystanders. I heard a man who stood by me say, as if in reply to somebody who must have indicated my mother,

"Yes, that is Madame Bertin St. Sauveur, wife to the rich agent de change of the Rue de la Victoire; he married an Englishwoman. She is, as you see, very handsome. They are in the receipt of 400,000 livres a year."

"Have they sons?" was the rejoinder.

"I believe that only the youngest of many children survives; she is a daughter, and must be still a child. They will marry her when she grows up to the son of the Duc de San Maglori; that will be the best affair St. Sauveur has yet accomplished, and he is always successful. With him everything turns to gold; he has the alchymist's stone."

"And he speculates?"

"Both he and his friend. Look at the man on whose arm she leans; is it not written in his face?"

"Who is he?"

"An Englishman, named Lismore, for many years well known in Paris."

"And also rich?"

“All the English are rich This one knows what he is about; he has a good head; sees clearly, and waits his time; but with all that he is a coxcomb: one day or other he will presume too much upon his skill; and I know no one who would be less able to endure a reverse.”

I had begun to listen with interest to this dialogue, when our carriage drew up, and we turned to pass the speaker, who bowed to Lismore. I know not why I have recollected a conversation between two people who never came in my way again, and whose names I never heard. It has been my lot to overhear many snatches of conversation in the same manner, that have afterwards been impressed on my mind by their association with my destiny. I cannot account for it, but on the supposal that more passes around us in which we have an interest, than a thoughtless head would be apt to imagine; and that, often vague and random words which, at the moment, we might think

hardly worth attention, bear for us a meaning either of prophesy or warning.

As we threaded the Boulevards and the dim streets adjacent, the desultory comments that my two companions interchanged were enlivened or interrupted by my imitation of those various operatic passages and "fiorituri," whose remembrance charmed my vacancy of thought, and no sooner had we arrived at home, than the pianoforte vibrated with the accompaniment of Desdemona's invocation, "S' il Padre m' abbandona," to the execution of which all my faculties were directed. A ball was given that night by the Duke of Orleans at the Palais Royal: one of his last balls, for it was the winter preceding the revolution of July, by which he obtained the crown. My mother invited Lismore to drink tea first, and she left us while it was preparing, to make some alterations in her dress. Perhaps more than half an hour had elapsed in her absence; she usually dressed very quickly, and had I not been so



well pleased at my music, I might have noticed the delay before Lismore did, who called my observation to it by looking up from his newspaper, with a request that I would remind her the time was passing quickly, and that she would be too late for the ball.

Although this demonstration of impatience, the hour to which the clock pointed, and the tea having been spoilt by waiting, were all very indifferent to my mind, I readily complied, and still singing as I went, opened the door that led into her room, with a remind ready for the occasion. The first glance I took of the interior struck me dumb. I went in and closed the door behind me. My mother seemed to have fallen upon the floor. The back of her head rested upon a divan near the fire: there was an open letter in her hand, but her arm had dropped with it towards the ground, and in her face there was neither colour, sense, or animation. I called to her—in vain; leant over her, and chafed both her hands in mine; sprinkled

her forehead with water and with essences ; and, in redoubled alarm at the insufficiency of these attempts at succour, was about to ring for help, when I perceived at last signs of returning consciousness. Looking confusedly about her for an instant, she caught sight of the letter, then of my intended movement, and made me a sign to leave the bell. By the time I had obeyed, and afforded my assistance in raising my poor mother from the ground, she was able to speak, and immediately, with an endeavour to assume composure, said :

“ My child, you must be silent about all this. Call Mr. Lismore here, I want to speak to him, and do not you be frightened, Diana ; I am better now, I shall be able to keep up.”

I was indeed alarmed. I think no one, in so short a time, had ever changed so much. An hour ago, not a trace of age could have been detected on those enchanting features, now drawn and discoloured with the agonizing

struggle of the mind. My mother's dark polished hair, partly wet and stringy from the water I had thrown over it, was tossed back from her wan temples, and looked the more disordered through the lustre of the diamonds that surmounted her brow.

The effect of her appearance shocked me so much, I almost hesitated at summoning a spectator; but she made a sign of insistance, caught at a shawl that I was about to place upon her shoulders, and folding it mechanically round her, waited immoveable, until, as she desired, I had introduced Lismore and left the room.

After countermanding the carriage, I sat down in a wretched state of perplexity, to con over the vague suspicions that floated in my mind concerning this sudden shock. There was nothing so commonly talked of as the fluctuations of financial fortunes. We might have sustained some losses. The letter I had

seen was in my father's hand-writing ! But could that have affected her so deeply ? and where was he—the writer ?

I understood nothing, nor ever thought about money. Luxury had been my daily bread, and I hardly conceived a different state of existence, or supposed that anything pertaining to material life could excite emotions so violent. Was it not more probably an accident, a catastrophe ? Wherefore, and of what kind ? My conjectures, aided by a frightened imagination, turned to every possible calamity, and rejected each as too painful to believe. All those domestic impressions that memory supplied for their foundation, such power as reason afforded me, I still combated with. Suffice it now to say, that after about two hours of horrible suspense, the door of my mother's room again opened, and Lismore reappeared.

He seemed to be bent upon some errand of importance, and nearly as much consternation as I had already witnessed, was reflected on

his generally placid and subdued countenance. After stopping to desire me to return to my mother, and telling me she needed all the strength of mind I could command for her support, and all the consolation my tenderness could administer, he offered no further explanation, and I, of course, asked nothing else.

My mother did not look more tranquil or more resigned than when I had left her. She looked as if, having sustained a long and laborious effort of self-control, she had become half stupified, and not myself knowing what to say, I knelt beside her, and waited for her to speak the first. She did nothing, however, of the kind, but presently she seized my head in her two hands, and pressed her lips upon it with a passionate, though tearless, vehemence.

“What can this be, dear mother?” I then expostulated. “What is it that makes you so unhappy? What has befallen us?”

She held me still tighter to her, and it seemed as if she breathed, rather than uttered,

in answer, over my head, the words, "Ruin ; irreparable ruin !"

I did not comprehend her meaning. No—even after it had been more composedly detailed ; the case failed to make a clear impression.

It appeared that my father had engaged in some speculation with a banking-house, whose credit was considered immovable. Owing to the fraud of one of its agents, this bank had failed ; and by a train of circumstances—no longer interesting, and needless to the progress of my narrative—had, in the catastrophe, swamped the whole of our fortune. My father had set off for Germany in pursuit of the author of this ruinous transaction, but without a hope of retrieving a calamity already widely circulated. Lismore, an undoubted authority in matters of business, had declared, after the perusal of his letter, the utter hopelessness of the case.

These were the details that I gathered in short but accurate fragments from my mother's lips ; and gradually, as she forced her mind to

the task, she became able to talk more collectedly, and we fell into a practical discussion of our misfortunes.

My ideas at this time, concerning property and fortune, were those of a child ; they were not founded upon any knowledge of the sources of wealth, or of the ways by which money is accumulated, transferred, or vested. It had hitherto been viewed by me as an accessory to our existence, no less natural than the dew-drops to the ground they nourished. And when the loss of this invisible support, that I had never clearly comprehended or defined, was logically proved, I could but turn in my mind, and direct my mother's consideration, to the many real tangible possessions my capacity was able to distinguish as objects of resource and indemnification. These made, as I thought, the foundation of wealth ; they had been acquired by money, and could therefore be converted back into money. We had a large hotel in town ; and we might, upon necessity, exist as comfortably in an

“apartment” of one-third its size. We had a villa at Luciennes with orangeries, gardens, and an ornamental farm, the sale of which would surely secure to us a comparative independance. I remembered that amongst my mother’s acquaintance, were a thousand people who gave no fêtes, wore no diamonds ; but who came as well dressed to hers, and were as well received ; why could we not be as contented, under such circumstances, as they appeared ? My annual presents were equal to the *trousseaux* of some of my friends, and my private allowance was not much less than what they had received on marrying ; there were many degrees between us and misery. Alas ! when I pointed out these different adjuncts, as capable of modifying a reverse of fortune, it was only to hear in explanation that each habit of luxury I so enumerated but added to the present blow. That the room we sate in, its furniture and decorations, every other accessory of wealth and comfort, must be sold for the good of our creditors, not for us ;



and as these concomitant circumstances were placed before me, I began to discover that the hand of fate had indeed fallen heavily. The hours of that night wore on, while my mind took in the conviction of calamity; not exactly the prescience of the future, of the singular and fitful destiny then weaving its web around me; for I was sixteen, and to have conceived such a life of perplexity and vicissitude as I now look back upon with awe, regret, yet resignation, would have been a supernatural vision. But yet the change became a conscious one; I felt it in the mental and bodily fatigue of this unusual vigil; I saw it in the dying embers and the drooping candles; in the sickening aspect of the dull gorgeous room, whose glitter, so habitual and unregarded, began to take a fitting ghost-like air of mockery, even as we talked the subject over, and in my mother's jaded countenance, and the unquiet abstraction of her mind, from what I said to comfort her. The bitter and positive view she took (the worldly-wise,

the knowing) of all that might have worked my inexperienced sensibility into a charmed, if delusive, exaltation, constituted my first essay of adversity, and it chilled me to the soul.

We sate together there. My mother tried to make me sleep upon the sofa, but the sight of her kept me awake. Often have I thought of her since; as she leant half dishevelled against the marble chimney-piece, looking at me with a dull expression of pain, of wonder, and perplexity. At last I longed for somebody to come; and hoped that every adventitious sound or step along the street would bring relief or change: and trembled to see it only produce a start of doubtful alarm, or a quivering sigh from her excited nerves. About seven o'clock Lisimore, who had promised to return, came back.

My mother left me to receive him in the adjoining room; and after she was gone, I believe I fell asleep.

## CHAPTER II.

L'homme ne diffère pas beaucoup de l'homme, mais celui-là l'emporte, qui a le courage de lutter contre la nécessité même.

UNTIL the period at which this narrative begins, my father had been considered a prosperous man. He had lived through times of blood, of trouble and commotion, unhurt, and, I believe, unimpressed by their fatal importance. His earliest destination had been to follow the military impulse of Napoleon's dynasty. His eldest brother, who was then a commissary to the army, having realised a large fortune, took charge of the family of Bertin, as well as of an only sister, whom he afterwards generously

portioned in marriage. My father, upon his return from Waterloo, found his wife, and last remaining child, thus sheltered in a comfortable home. Shortly after this, Michel St. Sauveur died, bequeathing his fortune equally between Bertin and his sister.

Amélie, who was wife to one of the marshals created by a government already extinct, became then the richest of the two ; her husband, besides being already in possession of her marriage portion, having retained a considerable fortune of his own. My father continued to increase his share of wealth by speculating in the funds. Everything in which he was concerned, from the time of the restoration succeeded ; his numerous connections, both foreign and social, made him well informed of all that passed, both at court and on the exchange, while the skilful transactions he had carried through, gave him a reputation for luck and foresight, that made his advice and opinion on all sides generally sought. In every affair of life, Lismore had

been, for many years, my father's coadjutor and confidential friend. I never heard how their intimacy first began; but he is as much associated with my early recollections as if he had made a part of the family; and I have cause to believe that he had, for many years, acted as mediator in circumstances that had disturbed my mother's domestic comfort. She and my father were, indeed, outwardly upon the best terms, but no instance of their community of feeling or sympathy on any subject can I recall. They led a life, more frequent in those days than it is now, of scarcely ever meeting but in society: the one seemed to me to be entirely occupied with his vocation, and the other (who was the most inoffensive, the most popular and charming of worldly women) to be contented in surrounding herself with an agreeable society, of which she was the fairest and purest ornament. Without being considered very clever, my mother had the art of making her house attractive. It belonged to no one caste, and yet

it might have suited all; her discrimination of society was an excellence in its way, like my father's superiority in speculation; and both were generally acknowledged, until the tide of fortune turned, and he was ruined. This is the point at which we were left in the preceding chapter. The miscreant who had put the last stroke to our ruin, and was pursued by my father, had already got beyond the reclamation of the law. But he, either unwilling to face his misfortunes, or in the hope of gaining some useful information upon the subject, remained abroad, deputing Lismore to conduct all that was to be done upon the spot for us.

My father's creditors were urgent; we had for some time appeared richer than we really were.

The hotel in the Rue de la Victoire was put up for sale. The great ladies of the "Faubourg" flocked to a house, whose hospitality some had enjoyed, and more had heard of. "How these people live!" said they, one to another. "What cost! what luxury! They deny themselves

nothing !” Many, who would have elbowed my mother in an ante-chamber, bid high for her jewels, and copied the refinements of her home with eager vanity.

The greater part, however, of our property was made over to one of these wealthy invaders of Paris, who have, for a long time, taken advantage of the disbanded state of society in that metropolis, to use it as a colony, where, instead of spreading civilisation, as the settlers do in the deserts of America, they find the facility of buying it offered to their hands. The contents of our house were eagerly sought, for Lismore, who had superintended our acquisitions and arrangements, though really caring for nothing but money, had obtained the reputation of being a connoisseur and a virtuoso. The dismantled shell, where my mother’s days of prosperity had passed, being left to become an *atelier social*, a *banque d’échange*, or a *phalanstère*, she determined upon moving for the present to Versailles, where we engaged a small apartment at the corner of

the Rue de l'Orangerie, until our future arrangements could be determined.

When everything was brought to a close, my father embarked for Canada. There he took up his abode, in the hope through some indications which he had received of retrieving in new enterprises a lost fortune. He carried with him a small sum of money, and left my mother in the receipt of a yearly stipend of five thousand livres; all, indeed, that remained from our losses. A like sum had been my pocket allowance for the last two years; spent in music, books, and trumpery for myself; and presents to my friends, servants, and other claimants. The worst of the matter was, that this sum was only secured upon my mother's life, and that, no more beneficial arrangement could be made. We had, however, a little money in hand to begin with, and we adorned our retreat with some relics of our old drawing-rooms, that gave it the look of a home. My mother declined the visits of her acquaintance. Nobody but Lismore was received; he brought us all the



newspapers and publications of the day, and wiled away my mother's melancholy hours with the tattle of a world in which she could no longer bear a part.

I have since reflected with a very painful interest upon this portion of my mother's life. Time and experience alone assimilate feeling ; and teach us the secrets of other hearts by the revelations they make to our own. The progress of an untoward destiny has forced upon mine the contrast of discerning experience, with the unjudging elasticity of youth ; and I have always thought that the want of moral companionship and support, which the disparity occasioned, must then have been trying to a nature to whom they were especially requisite. To me, poverty was, indeed, annoying ; but not bitter. My fits of dulness and of sadness were the result of a factitious education that had made me find privations in what I should not otherwise have considered worth a thought. I had been used to great prodigality in my

toilette, and was deficient in the method and economy by which many other girls would have fitted and dressed themselves for nothing. I cared for wealth because I liked to give, and hated to have to think of money; but its parade was indifferent to me, and to that anxiety of the future that poverty entails, I was impenetrable. I did not understand its use as a protection or a pedestal. To this day I have not been able to respect it; and then, when in my endeavours to console my mother for its loss, she used to shake her head and tell me coldly and impartially: "Believe me, Diana, that you know not what you are saying: never imagine or hope that the world will see in you any possible compensation for the loss of fortune," I considered her to be possessed by a monomania.

It would seem as if in youth, the possibility of enjoyment were enough without its realization; and that, till that breaks down with us, we can lose nothing. The future is a hidden inheritance, placing everything within our reach;

and it matters little what we can make of a changing present, when life is our property: so it goes on till life is ransacked; and then we begin to look to a surer aim—Eternity. I had, indeed, such hours of lassitude, and sadness of spirit as arise from the companionship of melancholy, and the wish for excitement or variety; but I had few regrets, and a night's sleep unfailingly restored with me the freshness of existence. My mother saw that I did not comprehend her views of adversity, and she forbore to confide to me her emotions: she was calm, courageous, practically stoical. But her drawing-room life had taught her the world: she looked at it as she had found it there, and knew it perhaps better than I could guess it.

I think I can now describe my mother unbiassed by the prepossession of filial love. The weaknesses as well as the qualities of the dead, may be reviewed without disparagement of their possessor, for they have cast them off. The

soil and contact of earth no longer darken the perfections of their nature, and we speak but of the vesture they have quitted, when we acknowledge their resemblance with ourselves. My mother was the daughter of an Irish gentleman, of good connections but scarcely any fortune. He and his family were among the *détenus* at Verdun, from whence resulted my mother's marriage. As people who have no decided importance, often make the widest distinction between themselves and those who are of a little less, Mr. ——— took his daughter's marriage to heart, as an unequal alliance, and from that time until his death had little communication with her or her husband.

The marriage of Anna ——— was not precisely to be termed a happy one, and yet I scarcely know if my mother's disposition was not of that easy and passive kind, that had hitherto adapted itself to the conditions of her life with a kind of suavity that had merged into content.

She had the gift of pleasing, above anybody I have ever met with ; a power that often occupies the fancy sufficiently to cheat the heart. She had clear perceptions, and good judgment. Her beauty was remarkable, and she never presumed upon it as a superiority, though it was a great object of attention and care in its adornment.

My father, it appears, did not appreciate the delicacy and distinction of her character ; she had desired no influence, but she had looked for sympathy of feeling, and was too simple as well as too candid, to use the artifices of coquetry that Frenchmen require. I have already adverted to Lismore's friendship with both ; and it may be easily understood how that intimacy became rivetted, under circumstances in which he shewed himself an attached and impartial adviser ; the more essential a one, from my mother having no intimate friends of her own sex. She had a conviction common to many pretty women, that they are mischievous ; and

after our misfortunes, I hardly remember any upon sufficiently familiar footing to have been received by her. This was our daily life. I used to go to my mother's room about twelve o'clock, when my morning's study of music and of reading was finished, and then assist her to complete her toilette, and afterwards lend my companionship or help, in any employment belonging to it, in which she was engaged. She, herself, attended to all the domestic arrangements and expenses ; never allowed me to interfere in, and seldom talked about them. At two o'clock, she established herself in her small dingy sitting-room, with a review, or a bit of work, as she had been used to do in her morning-room of old, and sometimes I read to her.

Towards dusk she took my arm, and we strolled into the palace gardens, then came back to dine, and when Lismore spent the evening with us, and brought the partition of the last new opera, or some newly invented toy, it

seemed a holiday. On the New Year's day we were loaded by him with caskets of sugar plums and sweetmeats ; I regretted more the pleasure of giving than that of receiving, and perhaps there was as much pride as generosity in my lamentations on that day.

Nothing occurred for some time in our changed life and habits, except the predisposition it seemed to give us for taking cold. At last I was quite laid up, and my mother, suffering from the same kind of illness, with less apparent security, would not be persuaded to remit her attention to me. I felt the more distressed about this, when I observed, long after my own recovery, that she had not effectually shaken off the remains of indisposition, and that every untoward variation of weather affected her chest or throat, and announced a debilitated state of constitution.

My father's sister, who had married the Marshal de Clécy, returned about this time to Paris, from an absence in Belgium, of some

duration, and immediately fixed upon a day to spend with us. She brought my cousin Valérie, her daughter, nearly of my own age. My mother was not overjoyed at the visit; for there had always been an estrangement between her and her sister-in-law that had kept up ceremonious relations.

The Maréchale held some post about the Orléans family, from which she assumed airs of importance; while my mother, being the prettiest woman and the most agreeable was, in general society, preferred.

I saw the melancholy look she gave at herself in the glass on hearing their carriage draw up, while she said:

“How shall we get through the day?”

Valérie and myself, however, met again with unfeigned delight. We had passed the greater part of our childhood together, and we had become sisters in the companionship of our little interests and pleasures. There was much to say to each other after so great a change of



circumstances on one side, and a redoubled effusion of tenderness and confidence after the separation these trials had included.

When we were left alone once more, it damped my spirits to be told that I might go to see them if they liked to have me, but that I must not urge the repetition of so fatiguing a visit. It never was repeated: the pretext of my mother's weak nerves exempted the Maréchale from an obligation that she herself would have considered equally irksome, and they compounded by allowing Valérie to come alone, and by her mother's expressing her sympathy and pity for me in unbounded terms.

As the year advanced, and the days grew longer, so that it was light until near six o'clock, I was seized with a melancholy sensation at the aspect of the season.

I have from that time ever after been struck with the sounds and look of this forlorn time of year, when not a leaf has burst upon the lank sticks of trees, that, like dry bones, rattle

in the sharp evening blast ; when little birds strain their throats in shrieking and chirruping, and schoolboys, hallooing in their play-grounds, fill the clear, empty, echoing air, and the earth looks like a wide unfurnished house to let.

My mother, too, seemed the fitting tenant of such a dismantled lodging ; a relic of the gone bye year, that had been forgotten, and had faded in the cold. I suggested to her often a change of air, to which she replied, "that she was thinking of it, and she must see what could be done," and so on. And I wondered at her persistence in remaining within sight of that Paris, that kept up so many regretful recollections, and did not comprehend that an invisible tie led her still to pine and suffer undefined distress, rather than break with dear associations.

## CHAPTER III.

*Vous êtes naturel!—oui;—mais soyez aimable.*

*VOLTAIRE.*

THE month of May came round, and brought blue sunny mornings, full of life and hope. When I returned from my early walks, loaded with flowers for my mother's sitting-room, I used to say to myself, "Surely this weather will do mamma good."

We were now left more alone than we had yet been, and though Lismore, when we did see him, was, if possible, more considerate and devoted than ever, his visits were certainly not so unremitting. My mother did not appear

to notice any change, or to expect him oftener than she saw him, and yet some instinct whispered to me, that she would attribute this to the influence of adversity, and suppose that her obscure solitude had less attraction for him than the daily resource of her *côterie* in Paris. It was an idea I feared to substantiate, for Lismore was her only friend.

We were one evening returning home from a late walk in the gardens of the palace, and as we sauntered down the great staircase to the left of the Orangery, we stopped to watch the various groups of people, who had been drawn that way, to attend a rural assembly in the "Bosquet de la Reine." There was dancing and a tombola going on that evening. We heard the sound of the violins where we stood, and looked at the happy families and laughing couples, who took their tickets at the gate, and crowded in after each other to join the fun. I did so wish to go and dance with them. My mother saw it, and feeling, no doubt, that it

was hard to debar me so small a recreation, took me in.

Until the last few years, in France, it was an unobjectionable custom to mingle in these fêtes of the lower classes ; I had been permitted to do so every summer, and had, in fact, never seen any other kind of ball. I danced, therefore, with perfect satisfaction, while my mother took possession of a chair behind me, addressing now and then a little conversation to a fat grocer's wife on the left, or to the proprietress of our apartment, who was seated by her, on the right.

On turning round, after the third dance was over, I saw that to the possession of one of her neighbour's chairs a gentleman had succeeded, and that another stood beside her whom I could not easily mistake. It was Lismore, who had driven down from Paris, with one of his acquaintances, to spend the evening. The young Frenchman, his companion, I had never seen before, but he got up and asked my

mother's permission to dance with me, who, of course, agreed.

When the contredanse was finished, she said it was time for us to go home ; but I, in order to prolong a pleasure, esteemed in proportion to its rarity, begged Lismore to dance with me once, before we returned. He laughed and replied, that he was very willing, though he did not support my petition as I had expected, and it produced a little hesitation before I had my way. We gained the dance however, with some hilarity at his unaccustomed achievement, and after it had concluded, and we were really about to depart, I recollect that, from having the habit of always following him and my mother, I rejected the arm he offered me, and said, thoughtlessly :

“ You forget mamma.”

He apologised with an unaccountable embarrassment, as I perceived at the same time that the stranger, whom I had not thought of, had an arm to offer ; it occurred to me, that I must have appeared guilty of some advance to

him : whereupon, attaching myself to the friend of the family, as unceremoniously as I had before repulsed him, we all quitted the garden together.

But my mother seemed to have been really vexed by the result of the evening. Before I went to my room, she said :

“ This kind of thing will not do at all : it would be quite an inconsistency in the retired life we lead, to encourage idle visitors from Paris.”

I remember her words left a slight feeling of dejection, and I too was annoyed with those who had caused this immediate repression of so harmless and natural a variation of our monotonous existence.

It was a few days after this little event, that my mother called me into her room, and bade me prepare myself for a serious conversation, in which, said she, my future prospects were deeply concerned.

Some girls of seventeen might wonder that a

question of my establishment in life should find me utterly unprepared: but neither this matter of fact view of marriage, or yet the more sentimental one, had come under my consideration. The first deficiency arose probably from some peculiarity of my education compared with that of other Frenchwomen: the second, doubtless, from the want of opportunity, for I had an idea of love from books, although that may be the medicine most fitted for indisposing some characters for prepossessions in real life.

The romances of Sir Walter Scott had favourably prepared my mind for nothing less than the future incarnation of an Edgar Ravenswood, and such a one I concluded the probabilities of life would present to me, under more favourable circumstances than those which had so fatally entangled the hero of the novel. I had indeed already been introduced to him, (in imagination); he had arrived one tempestuous evening on horseback, down some precipitous pass, the hind hoofs of his horse slipping after



his fore hoofs, at the imminent peril of a descent on his haunches. The rider was pale, proud, and poor, but he was better mounted than any of the loungers in the Champs Elysées or the Bois de Boulogne, and that was all that I had seen of him.

Was this then the moment for Ravenswood's arrival to be realised? Whose form had he taken, and under what circumstances was he to be presented? One only conjecture, referring me to the dandy of the "Bosquet de la Reine," answered these inward interrogations. I was flurried by the idea, and, no doubt, I blushed, for I can still recall the odd expression of my mother's face, as she said :

"I see you guess who I allude to."

"No, indeed," I answered, "not a bit."

I was right in refuting her supposition. It was Lismore.

The most natural and simple effect of circumstances in the world; but it did not appear so then to me. Lismore was twenty-

seven years older than myself. Nothing about him in any way represented to me a lover. His manners, habits, and opinions, were so familiar to me, there was nothing in them to excite my imagination, and I knew they did not accord with my sympathies. He was too old to assimilate himself to me; he was my mother's friend, and nothing else. Yet let me admit, that the surprise with which I listened to this offer, was at the moment unaccompanied by any other feeling, than that of the most positive and impenetrable indifference. To my mother's arguments in his favour, to her tender anxiety for me, which she now, for the first time, connected with doubts upon the stability of her own health, I listened with patient attention. And when, to her train of arguments, I yielded submissively the bias of my own thoughtless and impetuous nature, I believed I was reciprocating a duty that her protective care demanded, and was acting for the welfare of both.

It was in this spirit that I assured her of my conformity ; and felt convinced, as I threw myself into her arms, that if I were consummating a kind of sacrifice, the extent of which I hardly understood myself, that it was one well appreciated and dearly welcomed. From this time, as may be supposed, Lismore appeared in a new character. All his attention, and much of his conversation was addressed to me. I fancy my manner did not change at all. I have in my composition a certain dose of negligence, that has always made me compassionate to those with whom I could be nothing more. I am aware that the foundation of my character is a great frankness, an inaptitude, as well as a repugnance for deception. But I had also a mobility of mind, that associated itself to a certain point, involuntarily, with those amongst whom I lived, and which allowed me to fall with great ease into habits and circumstances the most varied. This, partly indolent, and superficially flexible kind of disposition, has

sometimes led me to coincide with those with whom I had no real communion of feeling, and has as often prevented the expression of sympathy, to the disappointment of others for whom I had the most regard, and would have made any sacrifice to please. Lismore was not deluded by it; love may be blind to the imperfections of its object, but can hardly mistake its own want of power, when it tests a disposition, that however outwardly pliable, undergoes little or no real modification from its influence.

Always scrupulous in his phrases and cautious of demonstration, he only intermitted in consequence an exclusive assiduity; and this, my mother attributed less to his want of confidence, than to the nature of the interest he had expressed to her, in offering himself as the guide and protector of my youth. In my inexacting temper also, there appeared to her only an ignorance of the world, that simplified the homage generally claimed from accepted love. Yet none of the three were perfectly

unconstrained in this new order of things ; no sooner had the future been positively settled, than a kind of magnetism began to act upon our spirits ; and of itself to complicate a position that had been decided without being duly weighed. This was so really, though unconsciously felt by my mother and myself, that when alone together we never spoke of the future, nor was the name of Lismore ever mentioned. Such circumstances might last for a time unadmitted and unacknowledged by all, but it was only for a time, and my own sensations grew more defined with the duration of the engagement. I felt the reaction of my mother's broken spirits, which I had hoped to heal ; and which began to bear upon me, as something that could not be shaken off, and in which the very principle of life was entangled. I cannot quite analyse the insensible progress of the change I underwent ; or how it first became perceptible to my understanding that all was going wrong ; and why it should be thus. It

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was a growing, creeping alarm, with which I observed my mother's altered face, her shrunken figure ; the loss of all the elasticity and glow of life. I compared the clothes she had laid aside with those that fitted now, and surveyed with consternation the wasting ravages of the last eight months.

June was coming ; the summer that was to have carried away the remains of her cold, had failed to soothe the irritation of the lungs ; and day by day, and hour by hour, a short cough, slight indeed, but dry and fixed, struck like a warning knock upon my heart. What a long echo it left there through after years ! Then, while we were together, it seemed to beat the time to my reading, work, or drawing. It followed upon every gust of air, or change of atmosphere, or excitation, or fatigue. It was like the call of a relentless spectre ; and when at night (still carrying on my dreams) I woke, the same low, hollow sound, behind the thin

partition was always there, keeping its tell-tale watch.

As the sighs burst from my loaded heart, I asked it, why I was giving all I had "*myself*;" when the end of such a sacrifice answered nothing where it had been required. For some time longer I had to struggle with my feelings, although every day the presence of Lismore became more irksome, and his claims upon my consideration more difficult to bear. Individually he had not altered; yet, when I thought of the ease and pleasure I had once felt in his society, and all that I felt now, the former seemed to have been impossible, or the change inconceivable.

In the beginning of this engagement, I had, from the consciousness of the little return it was in my power to make, exalted by a kind of imaginative justice, the merit of Lismore's attachment; and in one circumstance particularly, his delicacy and consideration had appeared such, as to induce me to accept an obligation, which the circumstances only in which we stood

towards each other could warrant. He had asked my consent to the allotment of a sum of money for which he had no direct use, and which by some especially advantageous occasion, he could invest in an annuity of 4,000 francs. He desired that it should be appropriated to my mother's use; but as he had not ventured to make this proposition to her, he required it to be done in my name, and under the promise of my inviolable secrecy, while he accounted to her for the increase of income by an arrangement from the ruins of my father's affairs.

I had never yet had a secret from my mother, and I hated to make one; but as well aware as Lismore of her disposition, and under the impression that my fate was in his hands, and that my confidence was now to be transferred to him I acquiesced, with a full sense of the liberality and kindness of the obligation. I had not been instructed in the state of our affairs, and did not know that our maintenance had been only



assured to the limit of my mother's life. I had not learnt that my father's ruin had been greatly precipitated by the rash and mistaken counsel of him who now came to our succour; nor could I understand that he had ulterior views in thus fettering a will that his experienced perspicuity had discovered to be not yet subdued in his favour. I look upon this as the first step in those gratuitous misfortunes that have woven their snares around me.

Let me go back to the moment when the view, at least of my own heart, became a more discerning one. For every day the sound of this man's voice became unmusical to my ears; the fluctuations of his countenance, and his watching eyes, at once embarrassed and depressed me. My heart sank at his approach; the smile faded from my lips, and my hand grew lifeless in his pressure. Still did my mother silence my anxiety about her by the assurance that her health improved, rather than not; that she should be quite well when she had a little time

to rest ; and she seemed to hurry on the arrangements that I was bent upon prolonging, in a way that perplexed and blinded my flagging spirit. •

My cousin Valérie came to pass the day with us that had been fixed for the drawing up of the settlements and signing of the marriage contract. When we were talking of it before we were called to attend this ceremony, I said I wished that it was over, as I thought the fatigue was injurious to my mother ; to which her manner of replying struck me as constrained and her look as scrutinising, though not direct. Perhaps this induced me to pay more than usual attention to my mother's countenance when our presence was called for.

Be it as it may, the routine of business was the most urgent object of our attendance, and she herself having explained with great seriousness the nature of one of the documents she was examining, after signing her own name to the contract, put the pen into my hand. The other

signatures were affixed in due order, the lawyers put up the deeds, and when they had withdrawn, Lismore, after a few words addressed to her in a low voice, followed them, and left us together.

## CHAPTER IV.

The night has stars—the heart has thoughts !—Thou green willow with the hanging boughs.—WALLACHIAN SONG.

I HAD watched my mother through all these proceedings. Her face was bent upon the table while she signed her name ; and when the deed had been passed over to Lismore to do the same, I was struck with something in her look that I had never seen before. It followed every movement of his pen as if by some unconscious fascination ; it followed him out of the door ; and when he had disappeared, when the assistants of the contract were gone with him, and we

were left alone, I saw her eyes close, and over her countenance fall the shade of such unutterable agony as I had never witnessed on a human face till then. A thought, a light, a conviction, the first ideal sense of passions to which my experience was a stranger, broke upon me. I was afraid to ask what was the matter. An indefinable kind of confusion weighed my eyelids to the ground, and struck back the words in my throat. Suddenly I put my arm round her neck—who was lost to my presence—and said in her ear, “Mother, I cannot marry this man.” She was startled from herself, and catching me by the arms held me back from her, while she looked up, and exclaimed in a terrified, subdued tone :

“Diana, what is this? Why do you say such strange, childish words? How can you choose the moment after so serious an act, for such a trifling contradiction?”

“Because,” said I, bending my head on to her lap, “I never knew till now, *I hate him*,”

and with this, I gave way to the tempest of my emotion in a fit of tears.

How could I have remained blind so long to my mother's secret! How had it never occurred to me that, under the circumstances of confidence, in which this friend had been so long trusted; through the cares and amusements, in which he had participated, with their conformity of tastes, and the agreeability of manner and conversation by which he was supposed to be distinguished, some feelings of more than ordinary partiality might not naturally have arisen. I was at an age, indeed, that judges by broad rules: brought up by my mother with pure and uncompromising principles, and respecting her as the source and head of all that bore the shape of virtue, my shallow perceptions could not definitely have separated sensibility from a defect of rectitude, and had hitherto implicitly believed in the supremacy of law over the affections. The wisdom of the last few minutes had broken up this false security; and when I

said and repeated that I hated Lismore, it was but a trifling exaggeration of the truth.

He appeared to me heartless and futile; he had admired my mother in her prosperity, had won upon her regard when she was in a position to reflect lustre upon his position, and to give an interest to his life without any exaction on her part. And now that all the brightness of her existence was at an end, her home destroyed, her society dispersed, her beauty faded, her fashion over, he had made a compromise with his fidelity by transferring this devotion to me. Youth and warmth of heart are exaggerated, and this was one of those lines of conduct that might be taken two ways. I could not feel the material obligation by which we should be restored to society, so much was I pained with the want of delicacy it revealed.

My mother looked alarmed at the exaltation of feeling with which I rejected prospects, that a point of conscience, or some motive equally weighty, would alone have justified her in

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### THE MARRIAGE CONTRACT.

refusing for me. She was right ; she knew my character, and how that febrile daring of the future might be more than once my enemy. Yet, through her just and earnest remonstrances, I fancied the relief of her own mind at my opposition still betrayed itself ; and perhaps her resistance was, in some measure, pacified by a fact that was better understood by me than by herself, and which I must have considered in a different light, had not my head been too heated to remember it at all.

By dint of heartfelt supplications, I prevailed upon her to accept, as steadfast, my change of purpose, and to break it to Lismore before he left the house. I was so ill with agitation that she made no condition, but that of my remaining quietly in my room, and of my not being disturbed the whole day. She warned me, however, of the certainty of Lismore's insisting upon an interview, that I might be prepared for it another time. My excitement continued unabated for many hours. Alone with my own



thoughts at night, I then reviewed the conflict of the past day, the way in which my mother had received the disclosure. I represented to myself how she could have worded it to Lismore ; how the interview must have passed between them ; the repose to which we should return, with fond anticipations for the revival of my mother's health, when relieved from a struggle that she had silently supported for the sake of those she loved. The state of our finances found their way into these meditations. With them, alas ! came the recollection of a circumstance until now overlooked, that again demolished the little fabric I was building up of future peace. For, after all, how was I released ? In the eagerness of my resolution, in the wilfulness of passion, had I not retracted a promise of marriage with a man from whom I had accepted an obligation ! a secret between us two, and by my consent ? I sat up in the bed. I pressed my hands to my throbbing temples, and felt my hair grow wet with the perspiration of despair, which inundated my

brow, at this insupportable recollection. I was then new to anguish of the mind. But how miserably had I played the fool. With my independence of spirit, my defiance of the world, my proud adoption of my poor mother's wrongs, thus gratuitously renouncing an engagement with one to whom I was bound by an invisible tie. To acknowledge this to my mother was impossible ! I dared not again disturb, and in such a fashion, her delicacy and her pride. After the violent display of emotion that she had that morning witnessed, what new anxieties would any change in my conduct create ! It was obvious to a mere child that such a proceeding was impracticable ; but what ! what ! So long as I sought a palliative or reprieve to my heart-stinging folly, I met with no answer but reproach, confusion, and regret. My mind did not clear till it had duly and submissively considered the necessity of accepting some serious consequence of this past imprudence. I felt that my mother was too gentle to have been

explicit ; and that when Lismore should appeal to me, I must only indefinitely defer the engagement which she had been commissioned to retract : further on I dared not contemplate. Time and reflection might give me courage ; at all events, the evil would be delayed. The mobility of my character prevented my ever dwelling upon an uncertain future ; I loved to make the best of the present ; and so, that load of sorrow was laid asleep in a corner of my heart, and all my energies were roused for the reception of Lismore on the following day. When he arrived, I was prepared.

I had never seen this man under any strong excitement. He had always been to me a man of the world, with some peculiarities of manner that were the style of that day ; an air of superficial deference, a constant attention to the modulation of his voice, and to the point and cadence of his phrases. He could not divest himself now of what habit had rendered mechanical, though his utterance was strangled and

interrupted, and the mixture of this conventional routine with real emotion, had a strange effect on me. He placed himself so as to command a full view of my countenance, and said :

“ Am I then to understand, Diana, that my greatest sin in your eyes, has been the discernment of attractions, which, under more favourable opportunities than you possessed, would doubtless have been recognised, and their conquest disputed by others ?”

I answered proudly, though with embarrassment :

“ No, sir.”

“ Then, if I am not accused of founding a disingenuous claim upon your inexperience, in what have I forfeited your good opinion ?”

“ Oh, no,” I began confusedly ; but with a gesture of his hand peculiar to himself in all kinds of argument, he stopped my answer :

“ Allow me,” he said, with a low but indisputable emphasis ; and after he had drawn out

his pocket-handkerchief, and held it to his forehead, with what I thought rather a theatrical air, he went on, "For I know that I am addressing myself neither to the puerile understanding or to the frivolous vanity of a heartless woman ! Tell me, therefore, was your act one of filial acquiescence, and of compassion to my feelings, and do I find you now insensible to both ? Speak, Diana ; I bow to your decision."

"No, indeed, Mr. Lismore," I answered, the more earnestly from the hurry in which I felt to get it over, and to exculpate myself ; "I am not childish, nor am I capricious, or insincere."

He looked keenly into my face ; he grew pale as he looked at me, and the reaction of his emotion made me feel sick with awe and terror, while I continued :

"I have known you very long ; I know nobody so well as you ; it gives me a right to speak to you openly ; to say what at first I did not think—did not expect."

"That I have a rival in your affections, a successful one."

Something about him made me smile in the midst of my agitation ; I tried to account for it by saying :

"It's true that I have not many objects of comparison in my acquaintance ; so that when I acknowledge there is ONE, it will not take you long to guess. I have but that one, and never shall have another."

"How am I to understand this exception?"

"That when I agreed to leave my mother's home, I thought I was only increasing her ties of—of—affection as well as mine."

"And is she not included in the thoughts of both of us?"

"If she would but consent to live in France ; —I find she will not."

All this was true.

"Oh, may I believe this, Diana?" he exclaimed, "and only feel, as I already have, that

not with the devotion of my life can I be worthy of you! Trust to it, however; trust to my persuasions with your mother, and believe, that in any way in which you can contribute to her happiness, whatever time you would dispose of in her favour, in every plan that can embellish her existence, I shall agree and shall unite with you."

"Alas!" said I, "your consideration is vain. I, better than any one," I continued, in a trembling voice, "appreciate your kind intentions and your forethought, otherwise I would not make this appeal to you. But my mother is determined upon returning to England. She is too sick for me to leave her. Let me go with her now, and wait till she gets well."

I was choking with tears, but I only heard Lismore say:

"I am too old to wait."

"No, no," I answered, "you cannot care for me as I care for her; so friendless, so helpless. If I were married my other duties would be in

the way of my attention to her. I have never yet left her for a day ; I cannot do so for ever."

"These amiable feelings," he answered, "form your greatest attraction in my eyes ; so far from disapproving, I should have regretted their absence. Duty and affection must always be united in a heart like yours, and it is for me, who can appreciate, to protect both."

I saw that he was inclined to treat my motives as some clinging instinct of childhood, easily to be overcome. So it proved. I pass over the repetition of reasonings with which he strove to alter my determination, to modify my will, or bring it to naught.

*That* was inflexible.

Once more he urged, quite at the last, that I would leave it in his hands, and inquired, "*if he* were able to persuade Mme. St. Sauveur, would I yield?"

I had ceased by that time to weep ; I had become quite calm ; and after an instant's hesi-



tation, in which he implored an answer, I looked up, and said :

“ Yes, Mr. Lismore, I will ; but do not try.”

These words came to me by a sudden inspiration ; they were the only effectual ones that I had uttered through the interview. The look which he exchanged with mine, as he turned mute away, was one that we could not have translated into words, but that I think neither of us could ever have forgotten.

He pressed me no more, but walked to the window, and buried his face in his hands. Anxious to bring this scene to a close, and with the least pain for both, I followed him, and said :

“ Have you no reliance upon my word ? Do you think that all that has passed can go for naught with me ? Here, I will show you this, that you may see how sincere I was, and am. Do not consider me as false or trifling.”

The proof to which I called his attention, was a memorial, written upon a leaf in my

pocket book, of the acceptance of the investment made in my name ; it was a transcript of the official deed, and was signed, "Silvester Basset Lismore to Diana St. Sauveur ;" under which I had added, and to this I pointed, "his future wife."

"You must take that," I said, tearing out the page, "or you will not be convinced that I consider myself so."

He repulsed it, and exclaimed against the idea of my binding myself ; but I gently insisted, saying that I intended it as a remind for *him*, not for *me*, and then he kissed the words that I had written, and folded it to his heart, and finally enclosed it in a little morocco case in his waistcoat-pocket. After this, he begged that, during our stay in England, and at all times, he might communicate with me, as well as with my mother, to which, of course, there was but one answer ; and as I gave it, he seized my hands, embracing them with tears and blessings, and assurances of unaltered attachment. However

lightly I might regard for Lismore the sacrifice I exacted, he felt it at that time. I could make to myself no illusion upon his distress, and his concession claimed, and had my gratitude. The reprieve was essential to my life.

We did not meet again before our departure for England, and this arrangement was for the best.

My spirits recovered the damp thrown over them by a long state of restraint. I felt like a bird that had broken through its cage.

The air was softer round me; the flowers sweeter, and the faces I met with, pleasanter and kinder. My mother's only did not realise my hopes; after the first reaction of my lightened heart on hers had passed over, she did not rally. No; I looked at her, and saw that her eyes were dim and hollow; that her mouth drooped at the corners, and that every week added an imperceptible line, or shade, to those that were imprinting on her soft lineaments the changes of decay.

## CHAPTER V.

O! from what ground of nature,  
Doth the pelican  
That self-devouring creature  
Prove so froward  
And untoward  
Her vitals for to strain.

And why the subtle fox while in death's wounds is  
lying,  
Doth not lament his pangs by howling and crying;  
And why the milk-white swan doth sing when she's a  
dying.

I HAVE said that my mother belonged to one of the old Irish families. Carried away early from her own country, she knew scarcely anything about it, except what she had gathered from the family traditions current in her home; and during the rambling life of straightened gentility her parents had led before her

marriage, she had taken in disgust the mania of *descent*, with which they barricaded their poverty and restricted her social facilities and enjoyments.

My mother had inherited nothing but beauty from her Milesian forefathers: her character was eminently Saxon; reserved and unobtrusive in her opinions, gentle and pliable to a certain point, unchanging and unmoveable beneath: she had the foundation of solidity that distinguishes the English, without their clumsy activity, perhaps without their energy of purpose.

There was very little of romance in her disposition. The narrations that stirred my spirit the most deeply, of the legends of the feudal Irish, their primitive forms of war and prayer, the inscriptions on their tombs, and hostile defiance of O'Donoughues and Macarthys had left no vivid traces on her mind; and it was merely for the gratification of my importunity, or as an exemplification of the way in which she had been bored with them in her youth,

that she ever recalled those chronicles of her home which had so much interest for me. Now, that circumstances were deciding her return or rather introduction, to a country familiar only by tradition, she felt almost as agreeably prepared for the encounter, as the child who is put to sleep in a haunted room, after having been well instructed in the history of its apparitions during broad daylight. The only one of my mother's relations who had cultivated her intimacy since she married, was her father's cousin, and the head of the family. Formerly, they were called Lords of Catherlugh; but the title had become extinct, and the hereditary demesne in the west of Ireland alone had descended to the present possessor. Mr. Tyrawley of Catherlugh was nearly sixty at this time. Having left Ireland at the death of his wife, some thirty years ago, and consigned his only son to the care of that lady's family, he had held successively diplomatic appointments at Naples and Vienna, and passed the rest of his life at Paris. Here, he was much at my

father's house ; and though now for some years retired from society, living upon a pension which was nearly all that he possessed, he had not heard of the change in our fortunes without offering to share with us his home, and regretting that he had not a better at his disposal. It was the hospitality of this friend in need that my mother had decided we should accept ; and, as soon as our arrangements were completed, we quitted France. In our way through England, we stopped a few days to pay a visit to two maiden sisters of my mother, who lived together on Richmond Hill.

They had never met since Anna's marriage ; and not having been with her and her father at Verdun, when it took place, the two sisters had lost that opportunity of modifying their sensitive pride at the match, and had carried on through life a grumbling disapproval, which, at length, had faded like themselves, and ejaculated its fervour into a tacit resignation.

The Misses ——, were tall, masculine-looking women, with large features, downcast eyes, and

preternaturally soft voices, which made them always appear to be talking in their sleep.

I could hardly believe that these gaunt, bony women were my mother's sisters ; I asked her if they had ever been handsome. She said she believed not ; that she could not bring to her remembrance what they had been ; they only recalled to her some indistinct idea of their general appearance ; she thought they must wear the same kind of gowns, and that they had made no change in their way of dressing since the Peace.

"It is that," she added, "that makes you consider them so odd-looking. We, who have so much sense as a nation, always run counter to sense in dress. Everything here is made loose where it should be tight, and plain where it should be full ; and nothing is put on the right way or fits in the right place."

No doubt, we appeared as strange to these ladies as they did, at least, to me. I have never seen them since ; perhaps they still live there ; and sometimes over their tea they talk of



that short passing visit, and bless themselves that they have never changed their dress, their ideas, or their state in life. That they have done what little they knew to be their duty; and have never discovered there was anything else to learn.

The Miss ——'s were, indeed, excellent women, though they criticised everything that did not accord with their own long-formed and long-sustained prejudices. And admitting nothing to be right that they had not either done themselves, or advised, their range of approval was naturally limited.

"I wish," said one of them to me, "we could persuade your dear mother to give up this wild scheme of going to keep house for Catherlugh."

"Yes, indeed," rejoined the other, "I wonder she is not struck by the glaring impropriety of domesticating herself and daughter with a man who, a few years ago, concluded a life of dissipation by marrying his kitchen maid."

"She is dead," I observed.

"It would be better if she were," said the former sister lowering her half-shut eyes.

"I know she is not *there*," I answered; "for in his kind letter to mamma he says, it is not in his power to offer her any material assistance, but that we shall do him a favour in sharing his *solitary* home. He says old age is creeping on, and finds him *dreary* and *alone*."

"Quite what he deserves, and might expect," observed the youngest of them, with the usual seraphic smile.

They looked like two tabby cats that sit purring in the sun.

"I am afraid mamma will find it rather melancholy; but still, it is very kind."

"Of course," said Charity; "Catherlugh is a wretched place, and that's why he makes the offer. Lady Juliana's son lives with his mother's relations in England, and is on bad terms with his father, who is forgotten by all his other connections; and no wonder!"

"Neither my sister or I are rich," said

Prudence. "It would be a more judicious and respectable arrangement, for your mother to join her resources with ours. The only complaint we have to make, is that of our unprotected situation, which the presence of a married sister and her daughter would entirely obviate."

This responsibility my mother had no inclination to incur; and before the week had passed over our heads we were on the opposite side of the Irish channel.

I wondered as we went, that, unlike other countries, I set foot in the unknown and dismantled home of my forefathers with a feeling of earnest though saddened curiosity, that kept me in a state of excitement through the journey.

Nothing in Ireland seemed to take date or pride from the past. Her mysterious, unconnected history had spread over a waste territory; strange relics of an age of poetry and music, love and religion, blended with the fiercest barbarisms of war and bloodshed. Sometimes we stopped to visit monastic remains, where all the refinement of art had been expended, and

where treasures of learning were enclosed, far in advance of other nations at the same epocha ; and not far distant from these were buildings the rudest and most uncouth ; dilapidated fortresses of neighbour chieftains, whose irregular stones yet frowned upon each other, as if in recollection of the times when their hostile owners were used to correspond after the laconic style, memorialised in the traditions they have left.

“ O’Neal to O’Donnell,

“ Pay me your tribute ; or if you don’t—

“ O’NEAL.”

“ O’Donnel to O’Neal,

“ I owe you no tribute ; and if I did—

“ O’DONNEL.”

And thus it is, that the incongruous ruins of Ireland leave only that mysterious and indefinable charm of things that are gone to heaven. You trace nothing from them ; but the past speaks to you in the air, and calls upon the

poetry of nature, to witness to the harmonious conjunction in which—where there is now *no country*—their prosperity once revelled.

The aspect of our journey, however, soon underwent a change. As we approached the Connemara country, which we traversed on our way to Catherlugh, and passed wild, gloomy tracts, where stones grow instead of trees, our hearts sank, and when one mountain rose after another, higher and higher still, blacker and drearier each than the one before it, my poor mother said :

“ What ARE we coming to ? ”

The Twelve Pins would have been the right answer, because they are so named ; but I said nothing, only thought that Dante might have travelled to Catherlugh before he began the “ *Divina Commedia*, ” and that we wanted nothing to the picture but the dark forest where he lost his way. Here, indeed, were neither forests, trees, or shrubs ; no peasants living in this part of Ireland, knowing that such things are.

At length we came again, by cross roads, upon a mitigated form of this grand desolation, and by and bye, we approached some signs of verdure, and of human habitations thinly scattered. Then, something like domestic culture and enclosures, though very unlike the trim state of private property, anywhere else, announced that we had come upon the demesne of Catherlugh.

Catherlugh was fine; I will confess it was fine, although it was a kind of stony grandeur, that drove one to despair. We passed through the farm and stabling before we gained the house, which was situated on the borders of a lake, called the White Lake, and we drew up under a broad stone archway, that formed the principal entrance to the building.

To the left of the hall was a double staircase, uniting on the first floor by a landing-place, and from thence communicating by a corridor with the upper rooms. We were shown along a similar passage underneath it by Mr. Tyrawley, to a small octagon turret room, that ended the suite

on the ground floor, and was his social apartment when not on ceremony. I shall never forget its dismal aspect. The front window looks from a terrace upon the lake. The side window upon a grim brown peat mountain, that seemed as if it intended to walk in some day, and turn us all out. It generally rained upon this room ; they say that mountains attract rain. When I sat here of an evening in the dusk, among pamphlets, and reviews, and statistical blue paper books, and registers, with which it was crowded, I felt why the kitchen-maid wife, (if kitchen-maid she were,) had run away. I never penetrated that story. Mr. Tyrawley had forbidden her name ever to be mentioned. Those only who could have talked upon the subject were probably his foreign men servants ; the women were all Irish, and could not express themselves distinctly in English, so that the mystery was well kept. But I was sure she had been mourned ; and I think that I once saw her picture, a faint, unfinished sketch, by his own hand.

Her flight seemed to have cast a shadow on the house, that told it had been deserted ; and when I tried to identify the stately and forbidding picture of Lady Juliana, with the reminiscences of Catherlugh, the magnetism of sympathy declared to me that she had nothing at all to do with them.

Tyrawley was a tall, thin, sharp featured man ; his countenance was not unpleasing, and his manner, which seemed to be no manner at all, was that of a high-bred gentleman, who had nothing left to learn of life or civilisation. He had a shrewd, penetrating eye, the more so that he had a habit of knitting his brow, and condensing his look, when anything fixed his attention : a smile that was ironical, almost cynical, and something caustic in his speech, but so easily and good-humouredly so, that it seemed like a habit of the world—too light to disturb the natural kindness and cordiality of his temper.

He welcomed us with the frankest hospitality, laughed at the *barrack* into which we had been



inveigled, and having desired us to call for all that we could get (which he feared would be little enough,) to make ourselves comfortable, showed us immediately afterwards to our rooms. They were situated upon the corridor over the one adjoining the hall, and we found our apartments there consisting of three rooms, sufficiently well prepared for our accommodation.

My mother had time to rest while I unpacked our gowns, and as since she had lost her own maid, she never admitted any service but mine, she was ready the first for dinner, and I pressed her to go down stairs, whilst I concluded my own arrangements. Upon leaving my room about a quarter of an hour later, I recollect that my attention was arrested by a little prattling, mumbling sound, which, coming from the extremity of the passage, caused me to turn my head, and perceive, that a few doors further than our own rooms there knelt upon an old fashioned window-seat, a child. The child was looking at the sunset on the lake, and making circles with a wet forefinger upon the pane of

glass, while holding with itself some kind of conversation that nobody else could understand. I went up to this child and looked at it, and it stopped talking, and looked round at me.

It seemed to be about four years old; it was very fair and pale, with little white arms and hands; it had straight, smooth, weak, sandy hair, light, full blue eyes, with red eye lids and eyelashes. It had a funny little sharp nose, sharp mouth, sharp, tiny teeth, and sharp chin; this does not sound pretty, but there was, nevertheless, something both intelligent and touching in its looks.

"Extraordinary little child," I said to it, "where do you come from?"

"There," he answered, pointing to a door ajar, that seemed to open upon a nursery.

"Oh! you live here, do you?" I returned, quite at a loss to account for the presence of anything like little children in this desolate house; but he, not appearing to consider that point as worth debating, "Well," said I, going

on with my questions, "and what is your name?"

"Johnny," he replied, very positively.

"And where are you going to now, Johnny?" for I observed that caution was suggesting to his reasoning faculties the premonitory measure of a gradual slide out of my reach: he had already made the length of the window-seat, and was letting himself quietly on to the ground—ready for a run.

"I am going down stairs; I may go if I choose."

"Do so," thought I, "it will very much amuse mamma to see us arrive together;" and I added aloud, catching hold of his little hand, "I am going down stairs also; let me come with you."

At first Johnny peremptorily rejected that proposal, and struggled to get off. Consoled, however, by hearing that I did not know the way, and wanted to be shown it, he consented to act as guide, and led me (doubtful into what regions I should be conducted) with undeviating

steps to the very octagon room, where the mountain frowned at us from the north, and to the west the lake now lay, glittering like a sheet of silver.

My mother and Mr. Tyrawley were sitting there in contemplation of the scene, and both looked rather startled at our entrance. My mother's conclusion was, obviously, that of our having got into some place inhabited by monkeys, and where I had taken an early opportunity of capturing one for the gratification of her curiosity.

Over Mr. Tyrawley's features there passed some strange, fleeting expression of embarrassment, that made me hope I had not done something foolish. I said deprecatingly :

"This little boy showed me the way down stairs."

"I hope," replied Tyrawley, with something of hesitation, "he has not been troublesome. Poor little fellow, he is left under my care ; but he is a very quiet child, and need not annoy you."

"I like him," I answered. "I am very fond of children."

Mr. Tyrawley looked relieved ; and from that moment Johnny and I remained the best of friends.

At dinner time the child was sent away, lest he might want to eat everything he saw, which Mr. Tyrawley would have been pained to refuse him. He was himself an epicure ; and though the house at Catherlugh was only half furnished, and the rents on the estate never paid, he had managed to retain a very good cook, and to supply the best fare. His dinners, though small, were luxurious, and he was always anxious that others should be as well pleased with them as himself. He had an unfailing habit of examining every dish in detail, with a scrutinising look and contracted eyebrows, before he tasted it, observing, if it answered his anticipation, "*Allons, Copet se soutient. Voilà un plat qui se laisse manger,*" and so on.

After dinner was at an end, we strolled out upon the terrace. There my poor mother

stood, silently gazing at that vast arena of Irish scenery, backed by gigantic heights, behind which lay the world. Tyrawley broke up her reverie by inquiring what she was thinking of. "That this is really very grand," she replied with a slight shudder.

I knew well enough what she was thinking of: the terrace and the orange trees at Luciennes; the promenade of the Champs-Élysées; the Italian Boulevard of Paris, and her own drawing-room in the Rue de la Victoire, with half-a-dozen talkers round her sofa. Poor mother! All that she was never to see again. We went up to our rooms early that evening; I saw that she was anxious to be left alone, free from all self-restraint.

The last act of her changed existence had opened upon her; and perhaps it is true that the fragments of our destiny are what we sunder from with greater pain than the fabric itself. In leaving France, she had broken the last link of her happy days, and then, for the first time, knew they were all over.

## CHAPTER VI.

Oh soon to me may summer's sun,  
No more light up the morn,  
No more to me the autumn wind,  
Wave o'er the yellow corn.

But in the narrow house of death,  
Let winter round me rave,  
And the next flowers that deck the spring  
Bloom o'er my peaceful grave.

BURNS.

WE had not been long at Catherlugh, when we heard that the revolution of July had taken place in France, and that the Duke of Orleans had assumed the throne under the title of Louis-Philippe. As Mr. Tyrawley had kept up

a certain degree of intercourse with the continent, this subject of conversation for a time superseded every other; and the weeks were only marked for him and my mother, by those days in which they received their foreign letters. When every new fact had been commented upon, till it was worn threadbare, they used to return to the subject of Ireland and their own personal topics.

“There is nothing I understand so little, of all that I meet with in this country,” my mother would say, “as your being here, living without an interest in the people, in a place so unfitted to your tastes, and former way of life.”

“What would you have me do?” was Tyrawley’s argument. “Where there is no choice, we must make of necessity a virtue. Were I to leave this place, I could not let it; I am old, and poor; my health declines. I am nothing to anybody. What can I expect better



from the world, than is to be found within my own walls?"

When my mother's observations were closed by this kind of philosophy, she used to be seized with a redoubled melancholy, and open the doors of the furnished rooms adjoining the octagon, and stroll through them. Tyrawley also would get up with his hands in his pockets ; and as her bending figure receded in the distance, he frequently shook his head, and observed, " You must take care of her ; she is not well." Then shrugged his shoulders, and went on, meditatively : " How she is changed ! What a pretty woman that was, when I left Paris a few years ago ! What a pretty woman ! " And my heart used to tighten while he kept on ejaculating this sad reminiscence.

I can hardly say if my mother's expectations, regarding this essay of country life, were disappointed ; but she soon found that it was a routine that did not suit her. Morally, her

state was that of a sick patient, who wanders from one place to another, in search of some spring, or atmosphere, or treatment by which they may obtain relief from pain, or the interest of following a regimen that allays the torments of a fatal illness. She had perhaps fancied that Catherlugh would afford this kind of distraction to her trials, and she had found in it no more than a complete alienation from all the resources of life. The damp, enervating nature of the climate was also unfavourable to her health; and as the autumn advanced, she began to solace its tedious days with new plans and combinations for the future.

My mother would have looked to Mr. Tyrawley for advice in this conjuncture. She needed to have the obstacles and advantages of each project set before her; and to hear the rate of living and charms of scenery in one locality, weighed against the facilities of society in another; and the feasibility of any decision

measured by the limits of her purse. But she had found him altered too, and incapable of the aid his varied experience would have been so well fitted to afford.

Either soured by his domestic annoyances, and the effect of disappointment coming upon him at the time he had broken up these social interests by which his mind was kept in activity, in order to form a home as the dependance of declining life ; or from the langour of spirits incidental to bad health, which had been probably the first warning motive of his retreat from the world, Tyrawley was become apathetic beyond the power of rousing to the practical interests of life. The whole anxiety of his existence, and his remaining energies were concentrated upon one subject, the little child to whom we have alluded.

The solicitude of this extravagant tenderness, so opposed to his habits and apparent nature,

breaking out at a time of life when the sensibilities are generally more or less deadened, and displayed as all incongruities are, with an awkwardness of which the individual is not conscious, sometimes harassed my mother's preoccupied mind, but oftener caused us both to smile. The terrors of Johnny not eating enough, or eating too much; of Johnny catching cold if he were not muffled in flannel, and strangled in scarlet-wollen comforters on dog-days; of Johnny catching fevers if he were taken beyond the gates; of Johnny being trodden upon or walked over if anybody entered the room abruptly, were the hourly and only remaining excitement of Tyrawley's days.

However ludicrous were these demonstrations of affection, there was something touching in its naïveté; the agony of its watchfulness, of its solicitude, for a being who knew not what it inspired and would never be able to make any return. But whether it were that in the weariness of an isolated state, his heart had

rested upon this child, as a necessity for replacing the lost interests of life ; or that his absorbing fondness were indeed a symptom of declining intelligence, it had the certain effect of indisposing him for any concerns unconnected with his present home.

Tyrawley's life was evidently drawing to a premature close ; he felt himself wearing out, though he could trace no actual complaint ; and for this last reason, when my mother urged him to resort to medical advice, he always shook his head, and answered that he could die at home as well as anywhere else.

But whenever the subject of his health was in question, he recurred to the helpless object of his solicitude, and said that he knew he should not last long enough to provide for him ; he feared Johnny would have few friends ; he hoped that she would never quite lose sight of him. My mother used, on her side, affectionately to promise all he asked, and thought then to fulfil her word. She did not know, she did

not feel, that both were running the same race, and that others must take up the interests they were equally to leave behind.

No, still she went on, poor soul, building a little earthly tabernacle, where I was to begin a new life under her protecting auspices, and she to carry on a blighted existence, of which her daughter's welfare was to be the sole spring and interest. For with the fever that, I believe, belongs to the malady of consumption, she had thrown off the first impression of her fate, and now fondly believed that she was not to be torn from her child.

Continually we passed in review the different provinces of the south, and compared the resources they offered, and settled the sort of life we should be able to lead, and the kind of home we might form in some distant spot.

One day my mother said to me :

"I can stay here no longer ; let us pack up and be gone."

It was then the beginning of winter. She had hesitated until the fine weather was at an end. The circumstance that decided her removal, was evidently the intelligence we had received the previous week from Lismore, of his having fixed upon leaving Paris for Ceylon, where he had property that required his personal management. He wrote this to my mother, and on the same subject he wrote to me, for the first time, since our separation.

To me he said, he could neither foresee or determine the length of his absence, but that in the uncertainty to which his prospects were now doomed, he had thought it a duty to devote himself to the positive interests of life, and that he hoped the future would compensate the self-imposed exile to which the few ensuing years were to be sacrificed.

His departure seemed to give my mother the courage to revisit France, which she had so long indeterminately debated upon doing.

The thought of leaving Tyrawley to his solitude, in such decaying health, yet gave both her and me pain; while he being himself more concerned than my poor mother was, that she, on her own account, required help from medical science, which was not to be obtained at Catherlugh, could make no remonstrances upon our leaving Ireland. At length he was persuaded to go with us as far as Dublin, and at that place, after making the journey in company, we parted from our friendly host.

We returned to France; but this time our change of domicile was disastrous in the extreme, and followed by the extinction of all our anticipated plans.

The fatigue of travelling in bad weather, and unattended with those habitual comforts that ill-health demanded as a necessity, destroyed the shattered remains of my mother's constitution. She fell ill before we had traversed Normandy, so that reaching with some diffi-



culty, St. Germain-en-Laye, we there took up our abode.

While we were here we received the tidings of Mr. Tyrawley's death, unexpected at the moment, though it could hardly cause surprise. It was a subject of regret and of sorrow, but it came at a time of such deep anxiety and pre-occupation, as hardly admitted the accession of other cares. We heard that the favourite object of his latest years was, for the time, left in charge of his eldest married son. My mother said, with a wan look :

“What can I do for him now?”

I internally prayed one day to be able to repay him the friendship we had received from his father ; and though there was some time and some vicissitudes to go through first, he and I met again.

We did not remain at St. Germain many months. I hasten to the close of that fatal epocha in my life—my mother's death.

Now that years and trouble have also done their work on me ; now that my illusions and elasticity of mind have followed hers, and that the perfume of existence has evaporated, I seem to identify my own feelings with those of one who passed some months of life under the sentence of mortality.

I know now the look of a world, and of animated nature, and of moving crowds, in which we have no more our parts ; where we view interests and activity, passions, hopes and fears, all in movement, from which we have been separated by an unseen hand, an unknown regulation of our destiny ; and amid which we walk as those who, having come to the end of an investigation, look back and contemplate the space they have trodden, and who, knowing by heart *that* which they undertook under the illusions of novelty, review it with the sensation of a departed ghost.

Needless reflections on the memory here

recorded! Why retrograde for one who has more new discoveries, and such as never pass away? Why daunt the anticipations of those who have yet to go forward?

## CHAPTER VII.

Dans le silence de la retraite, rien ne semble plus triste que l'esprit du monde.

MADAME DE STAEL.

I WAS for a time stunned by this stroke, and when the use of my intelligence was restored to me, I felt unable to exert it availably for the directions of the future:—I cared no longer what was to become of me. I had written to my father and to Lismore. My aunt, Mme. Clécy, upon hearing of my forlorn position, had come down to St. Germain, and indeed would have carried me back to her house

in Paris, but I begged to be allowed to remain in my retirement, under the care of a kind though humble friend to whose services we had been obliged, and with whom I desired to wait until I could receive answers to my letters, and instructions for the time to come. In my letter, I had transmitted to my father his wife's last farewell. He was now settled in Canada, where some new enterprise for the re-establishment of his fortune having been suggested to him, he was already engaged with all the earnestness that his patient habits of endurance, under a speculative mania, supplied him with.

In due time, his answer arrived. This was the first letter I had ever received from my father. It was kind without being effusive; it was the sort of letter that might have been addressed to a child: he had taken no heed of the progress of time, or rather of the maturing influence of misfortune during his absence. He exhorted me always to bear in mind the coun-

sels and education bestowed on me by one from whom all that was good and estimable was to be learnt. He compassionated (he said) and participated in that irreparable loss; and concluded by exhorting me to accept the protection offered by my kind relatives, to whose domestic enjoyment, he considered, it was in my power to become an acquisition that would compensate the charge they affectionately undertook.

The letter of Lismore was in a different style, though he adopted more the tone of a parent than of a lover; and I believe that this, which sprang from a feeling of delicacy towards the lost, tranquillised me too much about that with which he regarded me. His sympathy in this calamity, his consternation at the loss I had to bear, touched me very deeply. He did not refer to his own projects or return, but expressed a certain anxiety about my removal into the family of the Maréchal Clécy, and the protection that could be afforded by his house, which, although mingled with a very flattering

reliance upon my strength of character and prudence, left me with the impression that he considered it unsafe.

Now, I was not prudent; nor, I am ashamed to own, had I at that time naturally the strength of character that belongs to firm principle; for reflection had imperfectly begun to test what trial only has since made enduring. God had given me, in his grace, a nature exempt from any glaring propensity to evil; and he saved me from the temptation of yielding to whatever might have been ruinous in my disposition by the effect of some opposing influence that, through life, has always come between me and danger. I believe I had a good deal of pride, but I have heard so many people accuse themselves of pride, while I have thought they might rather have lauded the constancy of their pertinacious exposition of that evil spirit; and my own has been so rubbed and battered in the contact of the world, that the very acknowledgment of pride makes me smile. We

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use the word so indifferently, and behold it in such different lights! we frequently put our own forward as if it could be turned into a screen, while we stumble over that of others, unable to perceive when it is their proper footing. Most of us confess to pride while we are only vain—at most haughty, arrogant, disdainful, or self-sufficient. I was indolent by habit, not in spirit; fastidious in feeling as well as in taste, sincere from impulse, and constant because I cared for very few.

Being at this period of my life as unsuspecting as I was guileless, the mistrust of others wiser than myself found me invulnerable; and though I read the passage referred to in Lismore's letter more than once, I could make nothing of it, except that it corresponded with the yearning anxiety my mother had testified at the prospect of leaving me, and with some former allusions that had dropped in conversation between her and Mr. Tyrawley. But



what weight must I attach to this? Who could elucidate these observations? My mother and Tyrawley were both dead. There was no one else to whom I could apply.

I felt the want of present support and protection; my youth required age to hold by, and when Valérie brought me tender messages from her mother, and she repeated her offer of a home, I forgot that one to which I had not been destined by birth could have any other drawback than the memory I brought with me to it, of having once owned another.

I re-assured myself a little also for the future by a contingency that had lately come to my knowledge. In the arrangement of my interests on this occasion, it was shown to me how Lisimore had been, to a great degree, responsible for the circumstances that had consummated our ruin, both by his advice and rash agency; and this to a degree indeed that had involved himself partially in the losses we had sustained:

further, it appeared that his present absence for the arrangement of his estates in Ceylon was likely to detain him five years.

The first of these facts modified to my mind, in some measure, the state of dependance imposed by my destitution, and too hasty acceptance of his liberality. I would, indeed, willingly have employed the little talents I possessed in earning my own maintenance, but they were of that showy and superficial kind that, even if perfected under a prolonged course of study, are considered worse than useless when looked to as the support of life—at least for those who have not been trained to face the open world, and who come upon it unarmed and unprepared, both for its exigencies and its risks.

I was now in fact to consider myself wholly the property of Lismore ; but five years were to elapse before the engagement was to be fulfilled, and in that time how much (if I attained it) should I be changed ! How old I should be ! How

little I should have left to excite my curiosity or feelings! This was nearer the truth than could be well supposed in my contemplation of the chances of subsiding into a quiescent old age at twenty-two.

It was mid Lent when I returned to Paris, and found myself the sharer of Valérie's home in the Rue Neuve du Luxembourg. The aspect of the town had not undergone much change by the revolution. The change that had taken place was in the drawing-rooms. All the great families, who, having reassumed their dignities with the restoration of the Bourbons, formed the court and household of Charles X., had retreated from general society, and a great increase of importance had been acquired by the adherents of the Duke of Orleans, the leading capitalists, and creations of the empire.

A part of this kind of importance had occurred to Valérie's father; and his house was now one of the gayest, and most assiduous!

attended. Valérie, who was a year younger than myself, and who was as yet only to be seen in her mother's drawing-room, during Lent, mentioned in detail the long list of visitors, with whom the Maréchale was surrounded of an evening, and from whom she hoped, through my means to escape, under the pretext of joining a retirement, which was of course allowed to be unmolested. Madame Clécy, however, came to carry her away before the first evening was at an end; nor was I sorry to be left to go to bed—that refuge of life's way-worn passengers, who can cry themselves, as I did then, to sleep, and wake refreshed.

The next morning Madame Clécy came to pay her second visit, and alone. She entered into all her plans and arrangements for the future, and expressed herself as so desirous of replacing in care and affection those whom I had lost, that it never occurred to me that she

could have no intention of the kind. I was moved, and grateful; but I was not at my ease with her, and that I concluded was my own fault, and that it was an awkwardness of feeling which time would remove. It never did. Madame Clécy and I were not characters to be at ease together; but when there is either a supposed duty, or supposed cause for attachments unsupported by assimilation, how long we may go on without coming to the real nature of the hindrance, or discovering that it is an impossibility! The only fault I at that time detected in her, was one that lay on the surface, and is a very rare one for a Parisian.

She was ridiculous: I don't know if the word quite explains the fact in English, as it does in French; for in England, the national sense of ridicule is immeasurably less keen than in France. Here that quickness of perception is either a talent or an excess of civilization; in

France it is generally nothing more than eyes or ears. By "the ridicule" of Madame Clécy is to be understood, that kind of exaggeration into which people fall, who are perpetually forcing themselves upon the attention of the public under false colours. Nobody but themselves can be sure they are not natural; but everybody may see they are awkward; and I used to wonder that she was so invulnerable to the effect of her own grotesque representations of sensibility, refinement, and elevation, long before I discovered that she had no acquaintance with such virtues.

Madame Clécy was more than twenty years younger than her husband. She was a thin, eager-looking woman, with eyes like those of a sheep dog, always keeping an unquiet watch, who never sate five minutes together in the same place, or occupied herself ten minutes together with the same subject. When she was herself talking, she was generally listening to what other people were saying together; she

abounded in overstrained civilities, and passed her life in making apologies and explanations for incongruities that need have distressed no one but herself, and for neglects that were unnoticed until she pointed them out. She importuned everybody so much for their approbation, that they would have been ashamed to have felt inclined to grant it ; and were only brought to give her credit for the good qualities she enforced upon them, under the counterpoise of her being insupportable.

The popularity of the Marshal left her some illusions on this subject. His house was open to all the world, and it was convenient to the world to meet there. He was of so amiable and cordial a disposition, that it had become the resort of characters of mark who attracted others. Being governed by his wife, who had reaped the advantage of marrying a man so simple and so mild, by obtaining a great ascendancy over him, all requests and applications passed through her hands ; and this

influence insured her both flattery and homage.

The interview with me began as I have said, by great demonstrations of regard: it merged into a rambling interrogatory concerning my tastes, occupations, and views of happiness, which did not carry us very far, as these were all bounded by my present affliction. The Maréchale did not survey me steadily during the conversation; but her eyes continually reverted to the inspection she was certainly carrying on of my exterior, and no doubt it concluded satisfactorily for her maternal anxieties. I was very thin; my mourning was ill made, and homely as that of a Penitent. My hair and skin had the dry and sallow appearance that long anxiety and confinement give, even in youth; there could have been nothing about me, likely to infer a rivalry of attraction with other girls of the same age.

Having confirmed herself in the judgment that was to be formed of my qualifications, moral



and physical, Madame Clécy put an end to the audience, by proposing my introduction to the Marshal, whom I had not seen for the last two years. He received me with a cordial welcome, that instantly relieved the embarrassment I had felt during the previous hour, and restored me to the imagination that Valérie's home would be my sanctuary from the evils of life.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Qu'est-ce qu'une idée ?

C'est une image qui se peint dans mon cerveau.

Toutes nos pensées sont donc des Images ?

Assurément, car les idées les plus abstraites ne sont que les suites de tous les objets que j'ai aperçus.

Et quel est le peintre qui fait ce tableau ?

Ce n'est pas moi ; je ne suis pas assez bon dessinateur ; c'est celui qui m'a fait, qui fait mes idées.


\* \* \*

Nous savons très bien que les idées nous viennent par les sens ; mais nous ignorons toujours d'où elles partent.

THE whole of this year was given up to the pursuance of our studies, and Valérie's seclusion from the world was prolonged for my

sake, and on the condition that I should appear with her in the beginning of the following Carnival.

During the latter part of the summer, Madame Clécy paid some visits in the country, leaving us at home with the governess. She then sent for us to meet her at Dieppe, where we all remained until the end of November; and on our return to Paris she was occupied with preparations for Valérie's coming out. These few months of quiet were indeed essential to my recovery; and after a time, insensibly, the easy uniformity of pleasant occupation, the rest from immediate care, the solace of a companion of my own age, and the affection that united us, restored the equilibrium of my health and spirits. Our life at the sea-side was yet more to our tastes. We spent the greater part of our time in the open air, bathing, riding, and boating, with no other companionship than our own, superintended either by the Marshal or Madame Langlior; and we both returned to



Paris strong and well, the one in spite of the future or the past, and the other without a cloud upon either.

Our first ball had been fixed for the smartest that was to be given that winter. I felt the less elated of the two—naturally enough, though the crowd of the world was to both of us an exciting mystery. Valérie did not say what she expected there ; but seemed blindly happy to go and surprise from the hands of Providence, delights that only authentically belong to fairy tales. My idea of this fabulous prospect was more that of some forbidden ground, which I was to enter under a great responsibility ; but I, like Eve, was curious, and I tried to shake off that trepidation.

We went ; and we were well received. We had more dancers than we could accept, and heard the names of a few of them. The Maréchale was complimented about us. Several of my mother's former acquaintances welcomed

me kindly, and said that I was like her. She was not yet forgotten.

Valérie came home in buoyant spirits.

She kept the door open, between her room and mine, all the while she was undressing.

“Avoues que le monde est charmant? Comme nous allons nous amuser cet hiver! —D’ici au carême, nous avons encore bien des bals en perspective. Je compte m’en donner, moi. Et toi? Tu n’es donc pas folle de la danse! C’est que tu as l’air de dormir debout. Pourtant c’était joli; et d’un entrain! Tu devrais bien te mettre au piano—nous rappeler les motifs de ces contredanses. Voyons, en serais-tu capable?”

“Pour cela, non, ma chère amie, j’en ai déjà assez;—je suis lasse,—et là-dessus je te souhaite une bonne nuit.”

With which unsympathizing reply, I kissed her forehead, and shut the door between us. My mind was heavy and disturbed: things I

had not felt in our tranquil every-day life, came back with the chilly, tired sensation that follows a night of heated rooms, factitious mirth and music. As I looked at my ball gown and flowers, suspended by the side of the long glass, and in which I had decorated myself a few hours earlier with a complacent feeling of anticipation, I remembered they would be paid with Lismore's money.

All was not right ;—and yet—what was I doing wrong ;—what could I do else !

Once entered upon our gaieties, we had soon scarcely a night disengaged ; but my only real attraction in the pleasures of the world continued to be, as heretofore, the Italian Opera. After the first effort of returning there, and from the Marshal's large box on the grand tier, discerning that the place to the left of the stage, where my mother had been wont to sit, was occupied, I returned each time with greater calmness and an interest less alloyed to the scene.

I lost that strange feeling with which one sees one's self, after sad vicissitudes, in any well-known place of general resort, where everything is going on as we had left it, and as if it had never ceased. The same exits and entrances, save one; the same arrangements, the same applause, the same excitement; beyond all, the startling recurrence of sounds and cadences, that are answered by the yet deeper vibrations of memory.

There came a time when I returned there, if not with as light a heart as in those blessed days, at least with my thoughts again enthralled by the amusement of the evening — when, with Valérie, I used to trip up the red carpeted staircase, both of us glancing at the pier glass on the landing-place, and, as if we had caught the instinct of complacency from each other, smiling when our eyes met in it.

We had a kind of family likeness that might have allowed us to pass for sisters,

although we had probably a different character in our looks as well as dispositions. Valérie was fairer than I, and infinitely the more animated and brilliant in appearance. She had eyes that beamed with kindness and honesty, and as there never was a nature more sincere and frank, so these moral qualities were expressed in her fine features. She had the goodness of her father's heart, but with a more prompt and independent spirit; and the equality with which he divided his paternal care between us, appeared to her a thing of course.

Our mutual attachment became, with every day and every circumstance, more deeply cemented, and it was to the honour of Valérie's confiding nature that this was so; for my own complicated and entangled destiny had taught me to maintain a reserve that, from being a habit of restraint, extended itself to other things. Every step, every word of mine, seemed attended by more responsibility than



those of other people. I could listen to Valérie's pleased recital of her conquests ; to the mischievous gaiety with which she exposed or evaded her mother's projects of ambition ; her own harmless address in obtaining the company and attentions of those she preferred, to those she was told to prefer, and her naïve exposition of her feelings on all these occasions ; but to share them was, on my side, impossible ; and sometimes a throb of regret—but more in discontent than envy—followed upon the reflections concerning my own fate that these recitals created.

In some points, a companion must have been of advantage to Valérie, and on many I could not enter into a competition with her prospects ; yet in others I irritated the vanity and schemes of her mother, which soon became the cause of many disguised vexations inflicted upon me by her. As these always arrived under an overstrained show of compassion or raillery of com-

pliment, I received them without guessing the provocation by which they were induced, and only felt more at my ease with the Marshal, who never made any kind of distinction between the two.

The equal participation of our gaieties and our pursuits seemed almost a pleasure to him—it certainly doubled our own. We dressed alike, we sang together, and we were seldom seen apart: even at the Annual Exposition we were represented in one frame by the artist most in fashion; and the picture having given satisfaction established our success in the world.

No French girls at this time were allowed so much independence of conversation in society as we were; nor do I know to what it might be attributed, unless to the constant succession of guests at home, which varied and increased the intimacies of the family; as likewise, in some degree, to the preoccupations of Mme. Clécy

herself in the world, who, not yet ready to yield to others her individual claims upon attention, and ever restlessly active in maintaining or increasing the importance of her position, was unmindful of the conventional routine implanted by the usages of France.

With these facilities of acquaintance, and the admiration as well as homage with which Valérie was surrounded, it is natural enough that her thoughts, instead of following the direction of her mother's choice, should fix themselves upon some object widely opposed to it.

The match her parents had in view, was the Duc de San Maglori, the individual whose name I had heard coupled with mine in the vestibule of the Opera House, the night of our misfortunes. He was of Italian extraction, naturalized in France. His fortune had been deteriorated through political causes, and he sought to reinstate himself by a wealthy marriage.

He was about fifteen years older than Valérie, which did not amount to disparity of appearance; was a frequent visitor at the house of the Marshal, and doubted little of the delighted acceptance of his alliance by all the family.

As the Duc de San Maglori addressed himself solely to Valérie's parents, and his attentions to her were not such, in any way, as to compromise the future, he had no opportunity of discerning that the real obstacle to his hopes lay in the prepossession she had conceived for another, who had improved more directly upon the opportunities of acquaintance that we were afforded in the world.

The object of this preference was Ancelot de Revel, one of the young men of the day, who led the fashion, and who, to a very engaging manner, added a good deal of natural talent and information on general subjects, an agreeable conversation, and good looks.

For a short time I believed this predilection to be the sort of fancy that springs up in ball

rooms, lives and passes with them. Valérie had so many partners, so many succeeding admirers, that more than one favourite had been displaced by new aspirants; and it was only when I saw her general love of admiration begin to subside, and that her thoughts always turned to the same point, that it struck me this might be a question of happiness, not amusement. The idea of its being so caused me a vague kind of fear. Hers was a feeling I did not understand, and knew not how to interfere with: it spread a perceptible influence over her character, her views, her judgment, and therefore would have borne no rash disturbance without harm; it was in opposition to the fate we believed intended for her; and perhaps something, hardly to be defined, of want of confidence in the individual who had touched her affections, completed the state of anxiety it created.

Valérie had been too favoured a child of fortune to anticipate evil, or to doubt the future:

she would not believe, or own to herself she believed, that anything could militate against her happiness, while she saw herself the object of a devotion so gratifying to her feelings.

People who have never known opposition, fight against the apprehension of it; and if she now never went out without betraying a nervous anxiety, the excitement of the evening as surely dispersed it. The moments we passed in the carriage, before arriving at the scene of amusement, where Ancelot de Revel had generally preceded us, were the most trying. She no sooner perceived him than all cause for anxiety was effaced.

I remember one ball where our progress was more than usually retarded by the length of the file. On these occasions, Mme. Clécy had the custom of making up for the time she lost sight of us in public, by instituting a methodical course of inquiry and instruction, relative to our social proceedings.

It was put in a way that habitually annoyed

us both, and particularly jarred upon Valérie's present state of feelings. While the cross-examination was carried on, and in the intervals of the monosyllables she had recourse to in reply, I heard her foot rapidly and nervously striking against the bottom of the carriage; and for my part, I leant my head forward to see if we were within sight of the municipal guard at the gates of the house whither we were bound. A voice in the crowd, collected to look at the company as they passed, called out: "C'est celle-là, la guirlande blanche, qui est à mon goût," and at the same time, I perceived two boys of the populace clinging to a lamp-post, and thus familiarly passing their observations:

"Ne la regarde pas tant," said the one who had been addressed, with the jerking drawl that belongs to that class, "tu vas la faire rougir."

"Bah! elle y est faite," returned his companion, and at that moment the carriage made a few steps in advance, and with the next jolt turned into the court of the hotel.

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My hand was resting against the window, encumbered with my nosegay, pocket-handkerchief and fan : the latter, which was of some value, was shaken from my hand by the movement, and fell upon the stones. Uneasy for the fate of a favourite ornament, I stopped, as we alighted, to explain to the servant what had happened, and at the same time, saw a ragged boy glide between the horse's legs, (mounted by the Municipal,) pick up my fan, and run to present me with it.

It was the same who, a moment before in the street, had pointed me out to his companion : his pale face, laughing eyes, and nimble dexterity excited both my compassion and admiration. I desired the servant, as he carried away our cloaks, to give him some money, and only heard the next day that he had failed of pursuing him, and that the poor fellow had received no other reward than a sharp reprimand from the Municipal serjeant.



I recollect our return from that ball being marked for me with an unusual lassitude, almost amounting to depression; and on the part of Valérie by an equally confidential state of happiness. It distressed me to perceive that, absorbed in her own satisfactory illusions, she had noticed nothing likely to interrupt them; while I had plainly read in the face of the Maréchale that evening, a restless and ill-concealed vexation, which betokened her suspicions to be roused, and appeared to me nothing less than ominous of opposition to my cousin's hopes.

At last I stopped the effusions of her sanguine feelings, by saying :

"Tais-toi, Valérie. Je ne puis souffrir le nom de cet homme; il me fait l'effet de te porter malheur. C'est que tu n'y vois pas clair; que tu te forges mille chimères à son égard."

"Au fait," she exclaimed in return, "qu'ai-je dit de si insensé, de ce fou? Mes parens sont

enfin, d'honnêtes gens, ils ne voudront pas faire mon malheur—et cela sans prétexte quelconque. S'ils pouvaient encore faire valoir les objections vulgaires d'une position médiocre, d'une carrière incertaine, je les comprendrais, car ils pensent sur ce point comme le reste du monde ; mais non, il n'y a là-dessus rien à dire."

And here she went on to amplify, to my eyes, the superiority in birth to her own of Ancelot de Revel, and the importance of his rank in the army, with all the dignity accruing from a military appointment in one of the provinces of France, which he expected to have conferred on him, and on which his hopes of acceptance mainly depended.

"Et vois-tu," continued Valérie, "je serai ravie de quitter Paris. Je suis lasse de courir les bals :—tracassée à la maison—les grandes toilettes m'excèdent ; je veux m'en aller ; je veux avoir l'âme et le corps en repos."

This was hardly five months after the night of our first ball, when the world had appeared to Valérie a scene of such enchantment. It was the close of that short *after-season* in Paris that fills the time from Easter to summer. It was, indeed, probable that her father would yield to her wishes, if convinced of the stability of her affection; it was possible that her mother might be brought to do so after exacting such conditions and stipulations as would contract their independence; but I doubted the devotion of Ancelot, for I feared he was frivolous and irresolute, and this I could not say to her. Nevertheless the negative—because unavowed—engagement between these two went cautiously on, and no apparent notice beyond a casual warning from the Maréchale followed the assiduities of the Vicomte de Revel. The Duc de San Maglori had left Paris for his estate in the country without our knowing what had passed between him and Valérie's parents; and our

social arrangements were soon reduced to straggling visitors after we came in from a drive in the wood.

Among these I had been led, I know not upon what ground of association, to form an acquaintance that was more upon the footing of companionship and reciprocal interest, than mine had hitherto been with anybody. And though it is difficult, through the mist of years and changes of fate, to describe those most tried and best known, as we looked at them when the judgment had little to guide it, except an impressionable imagination, I shall try to remember how I saw one whom I believed myself to view with an impartial opinion, and who I then never expected would have had a part in the struggles of my existence.

One of the most intimate frequenters of my uncle's house was a young man named Montferrand: he was of an old Toulousaine family: his father, an officer in the same regiment, and friend of the Marshal, had been killed in the

Peninsular War, and the son had been an object of almost paternal interest to him ever since. Being brought up to no profession, inheriting scarcely any fortune, he had led a perpetually wandering life, going from country to country, wherever his fancy or curiosity impelled him to turn; and prolonging or varying his abode only from the same impulse. When first I saw him, it was on his return from a tour in the East; and a few weeks after that, he was planning a Steppe journey in southern Russia.

I used to hear people say, that if this young man were to take a part in public life, or would devote himself to any line or profession, he would gain some marked distinction; and that it was a pity he was without personal ambition. It might have been from repeated, though cursory, observations of this kind, that I was led to listen when he was talking; for he kept quite apart from the conversation that went on among the younger part of the society; did not

talk much to any woman except Mme. Clécy, and beyond a casual salutation, never addressed either Valérie or me. My cousin was used to his presence as the son of one of her father's friends, and knew nothing of him personally beyond that he was thought eccentric. None of the young men of the world seemed intimate with him, though his name was frequently referred to in their conversation, and his authority sometimes cited. Perhaps he and I should never have interchanged more than a trifling word if, the first time of our doing so, it had not fallen upon the subject to which I was most alive.

I recollect somebody contesting a particular way of noting an air in the opera of "*La Juive*," which happened to be in discussion ; and that Juste Montferrand supported his side of the question, by saying it was not so that I had sung it the other night. He had never appeared to listen to my singing, or to anything that did not belong to his own subjects of con-

versation ; and I looked up at him surprised, and said :

“ Comment ! Vous y avez fait attention ? Je ne vous croyais pas connoisseur ! ”

Without turning his head, he quietly answered :

“ Connoisseur, non. Amateur quelquefois. ”

It was one of my favourite airs. I cannot say if that was why his answer gave me pleasure—but it did ; and from that time our acquaintance began.

At first it rested upon insignificant topics—we seemed merely to speak again because we had spoken once. His voice was the pleasantest I had ever heard : it was a voice that led one on ; and insensibly our intercourse grew into conversation—and conversation almost to confidence.

When I heard the Marshal remonstrate with Montferrand upon his love of wandering, and urge him to turn his talents to account, I felt something in my mind go with him ; a sort of

wish, an anxious curiosity to see what that kind of intelligence would fix upon, and what the result would be.

But he always defended himself upon this subject by the plea, that those who conscientiously considered the duties for which they were fitted in life, ended by understanding them better than others could do for them ; and that he did not believe himself capable of a destination attended by the power or responsibilities of office.

It is probable that in this view of duty he was in fact more biassed by inclination than he supposed—that the very versatility of talent and eagerness of spirit that gives reluctance to a fixed destination, may also impair the steadiness necessary for directing those energies to one point with due effect.



## CHAPTER IX.

Tu mi contenti sì, quando tu solvi,  
Che non men, che saver, dubbiar m' aggrata.

DANTE.

I HAD now, for the first time, a companion whose society was more agreeable to me than a book, an opera, or a play. All the interests of life, which I had been forced to seek out of myself, began now to belong as it were to myself. Montferrand seemed, by the clearness and order of his own ideas, to shew me the facility of my comprehension. He either made me think like him, or else he taught me what there was in my own mind that I had not

before known or understood. And still, although when I reflected upon our conversations, I knew that our thoughts and feelings had united themselves thus ; yet, as the subjects we talked upon were chiefly those to which he was devoted, there was nothing more personal in his seeking my society, than might be warranted by his intimacy in the house.

Valérie also remarked the similarity of tastes that brought us together, without attaching any other importance to it ; for the enthusiastic—and as they were termed eccentric—opinions of Juste Montferrand had brought him to be considered as a man unfitted for social ties, in the opinion of all the world. For my part, I scarcely know whether attraction is to be explained. I heard Montferrand praised, sometimes for his looks—oftener for his abilities ; but I have always fancied that in those individual qualities that are called the disposition, lie the power of attaching—not from their abstract merit or virtue,


but from the way they harmonise with our own, and that these form the delight or repulsion we receive in all our intercourse with others. They give that certain life, tone, manner, or spirit to everything that is said or done, which either predisposes against, or endows with a charm not to be withstood.

Probably, when the Marshal and Madame Clécy adopted me into their house, they had looked to my early establishment as a thing of course. The former had announced his intention of securing to me a marriage portion ; and had, this year, suggested for my acceptance one or two propositions with which he had expressed himself satisfied, though he modified each recommendation with his usual amenity and indulgence ; saying, “ Ne crois pas que je veuille te sacrifier. Tu plais beaucoup, tu trouveras peut-être à mieux faire : je compte sur ta raison. D’ailleurs, cela te regarde,” and so forth.

Under the instinctive impression that Madame Clécy might consider the subject more urgent, I could but beg in return that what was said might go no further, and dwell in general but decided terms upon my repugnance to a separation from Valérie, and desire to make no change while her fate was unsettled. From a discussion of this kind, I returned with new zest to the routine of our summer life and our evening drives. It was in one of these through the Bois de Boulogne, that Madame Clécy, having ordered the carriage to draw up near the Mare d'Auteuil to rest, Valérie and myself, who were always glad of the opportunity of making a sketch, took out our albums and sate down in the shade to draw. It was one of the few resources left to us during the hot weather we spent in Paris. Montferrand, who was a good artist, had persuaded us to copy every thing that attracted our fancy, and we generally brought back some new object in our

sketch-book, of which it amused us to compare the choice, and submit the result to his criticism.

There were habitually stationed at this part of the wood an old woman and a very pretty girl, who kept donkeys to let. I wished to put them in my book ; but by that time Madame Clécy had already grown weary of walking about, and Valérie had finished shading her trees. Both were impatient to pay a promised visit at Auteuil ; and as, from this being our favourite promenade, we had become pretty well acquainted with the old woman, her granddaughter and the donkeys, Madame Clécy made no objection to my remaining with them, while she and Valérie fulfilled their civilities, and then returned to take me up. My drawing was soon finished ; and requiring to consider the scene from another point of view, I desired the girl to remain in the same position, while I carried my book to the opposite side of the



“Mare,” and sate down there on the grass to add a few touches. This edge of the water which was skirted by trees, left me at some distance from my humble companions.

While I was sitting there, I heard footsteps, and the voices of two people in conversation; but they would not have arrested my attention, had they not appeared to me to stop immediately behind me, carrying on a kind of broken dialogue, that sounded as if meant to be mysterious, and pointed at some one—I thought at me; and I was the more convinced of it, when one voice exclaimed: “Ah ! vous me la baillez, belle.” The other answered in a hushed voice, “Chut.”

I could not help turning round at this, which was exactly what I should not have done:—there were two figures there, at the distance of a few steps. One was directing the attention of the other to me, of whom both were obviously talking. I put up the sketch, just completed,

and rose from the bank; upon which they approached, and I was no sooner on my feet, than I found myself close by the side of a man, ill-dressed, of a certain age, and of a repulsive and vulgar countenance. “ Vous voilà bien seulette, belle enfant ! ” was the familiar way in which he accosted me, with a look, perhaps, more of scrutiny than of intentional insolence; but so disagreeable as to cause me to turn away. As I did so, I confronted on the other side, a lad of a still dirtier and lower appearance, whose face certainly brought to my mind some indistinct recollection. Later, it occurred to me, it was that of the individual who had picked up my fan in the court of the Hotel D—. At this moment, the sensation of remembering the boy’s features, without knowing where or how they could previously have come under my observation, connected with his comrade’s addressing me, caused me nothing but an undefined feeling of apprehension.

The first speaker, carrying his attention from me to the open book in my hand, intrusively examined the sketch, then the people it represented, and pursued his interlocution with, "Ah! je vois; c'est le portrait de c'te demoiselle que vous faites là—n'est-ce pas?" Not at all inclined to enter into conversation upon the subject, I looked with a certain anxiety towards the Auteuil gate, whence, at that moment, the servant opportunely arrived, saying the carriage waited; and thus relieved me of their importunity.

I did not fail to perceive, however, as I was going away, that the boy threw a leaf into the air, to see which way the wind blew; while his companion remarked, "Soyez tranquille, elle n'éventera pas la mèche," and that when I had got into the carriage, they watched us through the trees, till we had driven out of sight. The particularity of this little circumstance was afterwards revived in my mind by the re-



appearance of the same boy—always fated, as it seemed, to attract or rather force himself upon my attention ; and although on an occurrence of a still more trifling nature, yet the fact, from being connected with later scenes in my life, is still present to my memory.

In the course of the ensuing fortnight, Valérie and myself, having been sent to the Théâtre Français with the governess, missed our servant, who had been ordered to come and attend us from the box to the door of the theatre. We got there when the crowd was nearly dispersed ; and somebody who saw us from under the peristyle, guessing instead of obeying our need, darted forward and called up a citadine immediately. This time, it puzzled me less to recognize the lad already mentioned ; and seeing Madame Langlier about to remunerate his service, and remembering that he had not been paid for the restitution of my fan, I begged of her two pieces of five francs, and put

them into his hand from the window. He, however, instead of thanking us, flung the silver back into the carriage, touched his brow with the back of his fingers, and crying out "Au revoir, la belle" disappeared. Valérie burst out laughing, as we drove on, at the singularity of this conduct; and I, who felt not the least amused by the occurrence, drew my head back, saying, in my teeth, by way of countenance to her mirth, though I did not share it: "Gentil gamin, va ! je te porte dans mon cœur."

This was quite the end of our stay in Paris. We went again to Dieppe, and in our daily excursions and our quiet hours together, we now seldom quitted the subject of Valérie's prospects. She was ill at ease, constantly recurring to the objections to be raised against her hopes; and by the very fact of arranging her own arguments beforehand, showing how much the subject weighed upon her mind. I

smiled sometimes to perceive that the last reasons she thought of bringing forward, were those that were nearest to her heart, and knew not whether this were because the frivolous ambition of the Maréchale, coming under the garb of maternal foresight, she thought it wiser to oppose her prudential reasonings with arguments of the same kind, than to combat them by the expression of her feelings; or whether her heart—indeed, sometimes misgiving her as to the trustworthiness of the object of her affections—fell back upon her unsuitable tastes and temper for the worldly existence that was her alternation, as the safest ground of objection.

Valérie was never tired of inveighing against the ladies of the “Faubourg,” amongst whom her mother wished to see her pre-eminent, and with whom the Maréchale, herself, made no way. “They would look upon me,” she would observe, “as if I had escaped from a lazzeretto.

See, how few of them come to us ; and when we meet in neutral houses, how sulkily they return my mother's advances ; how they always find out that our fashions are exaggerated, our manners affected, our phraseology peculiar ! The worst of it is, I am convinced that we afford occasion for their fastidious impertinence, and therefore I could never be at my ease with them. Mamma does not see that herself, and will not understand that it could humiliate me."

If she exaggerated her susceptibility of criticism, Valérie was so far sensitive as those are who have been much flattered, even adulated, and who have, at the same time, but little confidence in their own attractions. The eager importance or inopportune servility of Madame Clécy had an effect in the world, which her daughter was too thorough a Frenchwoman not to see, and too modest not to extend to herself. The vanity of Madame Clécy being

always at variance with the insincerity of her character, was the cause of innumerable dilemmas, and difficulties, and blunders, in the progress of her career; and she had become conspicuous in society at a moment when it was little disposed to indulgence or conciliation. Those who excited her envy, while they caused her mortification, were themselves soured by the times.

Once at the head, they were now moving as cyphers in a mingled crowd, where they asserted their personal distinction the more tenaciously from its being the only prerogative they had left. I saw this, the better from my mother having brought me up with little of nationality on her side or my father's. Living much with foreigners of all countries, her perceptions had become more alive to these superficial qualities than they would have been if only conversant with one type; and through her I had discovered that social distinctions in France were

more deeply rooted than in England, from adhering to points independent of ostentation or appearance.

The discerning self-esteem, as well as the requisition for amusement in the French nature, has made it with them a point of reason to appropriate intelligence to the profit of what is called fashion. What there is no better English word for than "cleverness," has adorned the most triumphant times and existences of France; and still, while we are thriving ponderously upon our common sense, it gilds the ruins of that mutilated kingdom. Despoiled of their court appointments, precedence, houses of reception, and carriages of state, the French will never give up their prerogative of manner, dress and conversation—particularly the latter; because, tradition being essential to its exercise, makes at once its barrier, and that as long as they can talk, they have a domain to themselves.

There is hardly any value shown in England towards this gratification. No one thinks of such a thing as conversational English, and if it is spoken agreeably, it is by chance. We use our language for what we have to say : nothing can be more slovenly than the way we say it, who felt content to leave its beauties or resources to the care of orators, historians and poets.

The French, unlike us, exercise a great coquetry with their language, and maintain a superiority of power from that weapon of their wit, which they direct with such perfection. It is for them not only a talent—an attraction—to speak well ; but being one that came from court, supposes the highest distinction and caste in society, and well-bred people hold that advantage the more exclusively, from the flexibility of the French idiom lending itself with so marked and marvellous a facility, both to the turn of ideas in the individual, and to the habits of a class. The dialects of the different quarters

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of Paris are quite as distinct as their looks, and all so appropriate that they fit their owners as neatly as their shoes. But these are superfluous observations ; and having grown out of those made by Valérie upon her troubles, they have led me from them. Whenever she expressed her sense of the ordeal of criticism ; when she shrank from the world and complained of its exactions, I knew that she had read a new cause of alarm in some interference with her feelings which she considered of unlucky import, and that she then felt the insecurity of her hopes.

The time soon came round for our return to Paris : it was quite early in the season, and we found the Duc de San Maglori there. Ancelot de Revel appeared soon after. Everything went on as before, except that it was evident the crisis was approaching. Monsieur de Revel began to shew impatience at being kept in the background ; and Valérie became every day more nervous, more unfit to risk the issue, and yet more capable of resisting the arguments of



Ancelot. Steady and devoted as Valérie was in her affections, she had not the power of concealing either what she felt, or what, from the contrarieties of her position, she was made to suffer ; neither she nor Ancelot de Revel ever seemed to keep back from the other a difficulty or an annoyance in their separate circumstances—they worried each other and themselves. We change morally as we do physically with any long process of endurance. In the little avocations of our daily life, this change became apparent in Valérie : she was fickle and capricious in all that had before engrossed us mutually ; she began a thousand works and drawings, unable to pursue one, or finish any ; she was fretful without a cause, and in a state of restless impatience from morning till night. I could not wonder at it ; and no doubt she had yet more to support than an observer could be aware of. But I began sadly to feel, at last, that any decision would be better for her than indecision—and soon it came to that.

## CHAPTER X

I warned thee, I admonished thee ; foretold  
 The danger and the lurking enemy  
 That lay in wait.                   \*                   \*

                 \*                   \*                   \*

But confidence then bore thee on secure,  
 Either to meet no danger, or to find  
 Matter of glorious trial ; and perhaps  
 I also err'd, in overmuch admiring  
 What seem'd in thee so perfect, that I thought  
 No evil durst attempt thee.

MILTON.

THE time approached when Ancelet de Revel  
 was to be called to his military post at ———.  
 This expectation increased the difficulties and  
 excitement of the position. It was not possible

to believe it could end peaceably; for though Valérie said less and less about it, and at last maintained a complete silence on the subject, it was obvious that she had not an intention of yielding; and on the other hand, who could perceive the attempt of her wilful, but honest, spirit to maintain itself against the intriguing tenacity of her mother, and not understand the inequality of the contest. I asked no questions of either, and when I heard one morning in the house that M. de Revel had left Paris, I forbore to testify my surprise.

Half an hour later, Valérie herself came into my room.

“Do you know why Ancelot is gone?” she said.

“How could I know anything about it until you had told me?”

“Can you guess?”

“Perhaps.”

“Well ! let me hear.”

"I should conclude you had changed your mind, and—"

"What?"

"Have told him so."

"*I told him!*" she exclaimed in the same hard, abrupt tone with which she had begun the dialogue. "*I told him!* Why this is the first word I know about the matter."

Her manner frightened me, and I said, after a minute's hesitation :

"I can't make out what you are at."

"You don't believe me?" returned Valérie.

"Believe what? explain yourself, for Heaven's sake. What has happened?"

"I give you my word, I know no more than you do. All I can say is—the fact: to me as unforeseen, as unexpected—as—Ah!" she resumed, with an accent of unutterable impatience, "there are things for which there is no comparison."

"Gone!" I ejaculated, quite at a loss for an answer. "You say Ancelot de Revel is gone!"

The word "gone" raised for one instant a singularly sardonic smile on Valérie's features ; the next, with impenetrable quietness of voice, she resumed :

"It has been just announced to me. It seems he had yesterday an interview with my father ; that he left the house to deliberate upon the concessions my parents had thought fit to make, and this morning has quitted Paris."

"Oh ! impossible."

"Yet true."

"What could it have been that passed between them ?"

"I can't tell you, for I don't know."

"Then, we must find out."

"I leave that to others. I have no curiosity on the subject."

"You will think differently when you have considered the consequences."

"Ah !" she replied, as if suddenly roused to recollection, "that's what I came to tell you."

"What ?"

"I am to marry M. de Maglori."

"Not yet! it would be too sudden a determination."

"There's no more to be said; it's settled."

In spite of the impetuous decision with which my cousin pronounced these words, I threw myself before her; and seizing her hands, which were quite cold and damp with the effects of an overpowering agitation, I strove by persuasion and supplication to recall her to a more impartial state of mind; but I had no sooner urged the necessity of patience than Valérie released her hands violently from mine, and covering her face with them, to conceal and catch the tears that then burst out in torrents, ejaculated in an agony of self-compassion:

"Ah! if you knew, Diana, *how* mine has been tried: too much! too much!"

By dint of interrogations, I at last discovered that all that was known upon the subject had been related by her mother, and though she

could not then bring herself to tell me in detail the real purport of Mme. Clécy's communication; namely, that in the explanation that had taken place between Ancelot de Revel and the Marshal, some conditions of fortune had been stipulated by the one that did not suit the other, which discussion had ended in a rupture, she gave me to understand that her parents had been all that she could wish, and she had no one to reproach but herself.

The fact of such a point having been in debate, showed indeed their intention to give up prejudices for her sake that she would have hardly dared to hope, on the subject of a connection for which they were ill-disposed; and it is easy to imagine how repugnant to every feeling of Valérie's nature must have been a rupture on such a point as this.

The audience with her parents had announced to Valérie, that the secession of M. de Revel had been followed by a candid explanation from

the Duke de San Maglori. He had committed his suit to their protection ; it was one they were earnest in urging, and it was presented to her in a moment when gratitude for their tolerance, and the conviction of its having been unworthily required, rendered her acquiescence instantaneous.

When my cousin had regained a little composure, I left her, and determined within myself to seek Mme. Clécy, from whom—though I could not expect to get any satisfactory explanation—time at least might be gained, by inducing her to leave Valérie to herself for the present, unbiassed and unexcited by comments.

It was impossible to anticipate without alarm the consequences of a decision taken in such a state of mind as she was then in. The arguments I had used regarding her duty to another, as well as to herself ; of not acting on a misunderstanding of this nature, without giving an opportunity of explanation, defence, or justifi-



cation, were utterly useless. She felt that nothing ought to excuse in her eyes the abrupt departure of Ancelot, the indelicacy with which he had released himself, the outrage not only to a rare and scrupulous fidelity, but to the commonest rules of personal consideration. Ill as it looked, my supposition was, that she had been in some measure deceived, and that the real motive of Ancelot's conduct would be discovered.

It was unlikely that, however frivolous or heartless his character, he would expose himself so unhesitatingly to an imputation of mercenary designs; and it seemed probable to an uninfluenced observer, that there must have been some letter intercepted, or some distortion of the circumstances, which, if a delay were allowed, would give him an opportunity of placing himself in a fairer light.

Mme. Clécy was one of those people whose access is never free. She was always occupied

with something, or seeing somebody ; and while she gave an audience, all kinds of whispering orders and cross-handed missives were going on with other people. I was used to this, and when she sent me word that she was finishing a letter, and would speak to me in five minutes, I took up a new play, by Victor Hugo, which I thought I should be able to get through in the time, and only felt so nervous about all that her letter must be communicating to the Duke de San Maglori, that I involuntarily invested the personages with his identity and that of my cousin, and was in the ideal representation of Valérie expiring by poison, in the last act, when I was called into her presence.

The Maréchale had evidently no idea of the time that had elapsed, for she said :

“ I could not hear of your waiting one instant to-day—I knew the subject was too exciting for us both. Our dearest Valérie ! what a moment of unstained felicity ! ”

She touched my cheek with her chin, which was meant for a kiss, made a moan of unutterable transport, and desired me to sit down beside her.

This was a perplexing beginning for what I had upon my mind; but as that was what Mme. Clécy was least desirous to hear, she arrested its utterance by expressing her own feelings on the occasion of her daughter's awakening to the truth, which she expected me, who knew with what abnegation she had looked at the self-sacrifice of her child, to congratulate her upon.

Instead of doing this, I begged her to consider that Valérie was under the influence of pique and wounded feeling, and represented as well as I could how much cause for alarm there was in the state she had been thrown into.

This she would not be brought to understand;—could not, indeed, conceive the delusion of my senses in supposing it. Valérie's be-

haviour was perfect, her agitation natural, her acknowledgment of her error angelic. Mme. Clécy hoped she was not now to fall a prey to the influence of insidious advice, and her pure and natural feelings be tainted by the counsels, or example of a perverse imagination. Valérie's position entailed responsibilities not to be overlooked. Valérie was the daughter of the Marshal and Maréchale Clécy, and, as such, was destined to an important place in society.

The Maréchale was in an obvious state of trepidation, lest her daughter should have recalled her word, or prove not equal to its fulfilment. She could not gain any reassurance from me in the way in which she sought it. She therefore soon lost her temper and her dignity; attempted first to cajole me to join with her in biassing my cousin, and then tried to intimidate me into doing so. She reminded me of my dependance upon her, and when she

said that, though I made no answer, we looked full into each other's eyes. Then took place, at that crisis, a little episode in our interview, that prevented the discussion being carried on.

We were sitting on a 'divan, behind a window that opened to the garden, and of which window the Persian shutters were closed. More than once during our controversy, I had felt sure that I heard a tap repeated at intervals outside the shutter. When Mme. Clécy had spoken of my dependance, and while I perused her features with the impression that hers was a bad countenance to depend on, I heard the same knock louder than before. She heard it too, for I saw her glance at her watch upon the table, and change colour. Then she hurried a few phrases of conclusion to her speech in great embarrassment, not thinking what she was saying, and got up. I did so likewise at the hint, ready to depart; but at the same moment, the Marshal's voice was heard, asking to come

in, from the adjoining room, and the knock was repeated at the window.

Mme. Clécy caught hold of my wrist to stop me, while she inquired what he wanted. It was to show in the Duke de San Maglori, who had been paying the Marshal a visit, and who requested an interview. They were both at the door. She was in a state of awful perplexity. She had to be kind to me immediately, without any time for modifying the transition, because she wanted to make use of me, and feared my indiscretion. I was the only excuse for preventing the inopportune entrance of her husband and his guest, and yet she would infinitely have preferred being then at the bottom of the Seine.

In this dilemma, her decision was easily made: she called out to the Marshal to apologise for her, while she said two words to me that were of importance, and they were these :

“ Diana, mon chou, you are integrity itself,

and I adore you. I never could place confidence in any other creature. Go behind that curtain this moment, and be still. There is somebody there I must speak to."

As she lifted the heavy tapestry that hung before the door into the next room, I had every inclination to go through it, and never to come back again ; but restraining pride, disgust, and many other emotions of that nature, I answered to her reiterated cautions : " I have no business with your secrets, Madam," and quietly did as I was bid, while she let the curtain fall after me.

Immediately afterwards, I heard her pull the wire of the shutter, and a man came into the room. I thought that I detected the noise of a pen, as if used in the action of writing ; but they must have spoken in signs, for not a word was uttered. In less than two minutes, Mme. Clécy undrew the curtain, and I saw her alone ; she was flushed, but

smiling—radiant. She herself threw open the door of the saloon, and when the Marshal and M. de San Maglori came forward, was in the act of loading me with caresses and compliments.

“Now go to my Valérie, and take her these flowers from me,” she said, detaching a nosegay from her bosom, and wafting it before my face, as I received it and left the room.

On my way up stairs, I perceived a bit of folded paper hanging by the leaves, and opening it to twist round the stalks, I then saw that there were a few words of writing. It was a receipt for 2000 francs, signed, Jean Brunel.

“Whatever the nature of the secret,” thought I, “this is it, and therefore I went back with the nosegay, and the paper in the leaves, and returned it to Mme. Clécy, saying that Valérie had the headache, and that the perfume of the tuberose would increase it.”

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For two or three days, while Valérie's marriage was being settled between her parents and the Duke de San Maglori, I expected—what did not happen—that something would have been heard from Monsieur de Revel, to prove that the details of the mystery were less unfavourable to him than our pride would allow us to see. I say ours, for the exchange of feeling between Valérie and myself had almost identified me with her emotions, and what she smothered I expressed. Nothing, as I have said, was heard; the marriage preparations took the usual course; the scene had changed so swiftly, it was like a dream; and as to Valérie, the suddenness with which she had passed from the excitement of wounded feeling, to that of being congratulated and courted on every side, kept her in a state that confused and deadened thought.

Whenever there came an hour of respite or of lassitude in which she gave way, I always

encouraged her to speak of her feelings ; for it seemed safest to me to know the worst, and to let her heart vent itself.

The candour of Valérie's disposition made our intercourse as easy as it was charming. She never thought herself better than she was, or wished any one to believe her so ; and this saved a world of guessing and uncertainty to all who were connected with her. It has been very well said, "*Le vrai est comme il peut, et n'a de mérite, que d'être ce qu'il est.*" If we aim at being plausible, we hardly attain to consistency, but we may be sure of being tiresome.

Every day brought some new instance of the liberality and good feeling of the Duke de San Maglori : she could not be insensible to these ; she felt elevated by his conduct, she felt more security in her own fate. As the time of the wedding grew nearer, I saw that both composure and hope increased. I asked her if it was not so :

she said, she hardly knew then what she thought. She was both dazzled and hurried; but she felt as if it would come right. She acknowledged that her self-esteem had received a great blow, and added with simplicity, that she had not known till now how great a share vanity held both in our joys and sorrows.

“Only,” said Valérie, “with me it is not everything. While my feelings were engaged, this show and nonsense would have been nothing to me; now, it is an amusement—it has its worth.

“Oh! had I given up this marriage, what would have been my fate! How bitterly I should have felt my credulity! and that’s what I should have done too with my own will, had they given me the explicit avowal of Monsieur de San Maglori’s intentions—had they let me act for myself. My poor parents were wiser than I: I feel that they have saved my life. Yes, the world has its charms, though I did

not see them. I thought that most of the people who seemed to like me, wanted money. I did not expect to be popular—to be approved so generally. And yet, what moments in the midst of all this I have to pass! What thoughts come over me! Then, I could bury myself with them, and wish never to be heard of more. You cannot understand me; I cannot explain myself; but sometimes I wonder if I shall be able to go a step further.”

“Yes. I am certain that you require courage, Valérie,” I used to answer; “but I think it will be made up to you. We can all do what is required of us in this world; and if we bring resolution, God gives strength.”

“Indeed, I feel that,” she replied; “and yet appearances are false! for all the world would envy me, and some people might pity you; yet, you are free, Diane: you may love, and you will love some day, and choose better than I have done.”

To that I answered nothing.


I forbear here to make more comments upon Valérie's mother than are necessary. In the first place, it is difficult to analyse the conduct of one who had so much influence upon her daughter's fate, and yet whom I at that time so little understood: if I thought she must have acted deceitfully and unfairly, how these vices had been brought into action would have been difficult to say; nor dared I allow myself to attribute to another more than I knew from proof.

The mysterious silence of Ancelot de Revel forbade all certainty in our construction of what had passed: no one forfeits willingly the esteem to which they are entitled, and I thought to myself he must have guessed in what hands he had left the dignity of his memory.

As time drew on, and everything went smoothly, I believed that I, who saw the worst points of the character of Madame Clécy,

might have too far exaggerated their power and tendency, knowing that my own careless frankness was a trial to her intriguing nature, and that some circumstances of late, in which I had been neither active or conscious, had made me personally obnoxious; and I felt that this had contributed to interfere with my respect for her, and might have led me to charge her with the share of censure that was due to others.

However it had been, her point was gained; and here I could not but perceive that, although it had doubtless made her happy, she did not look so. Something about Madame Clécy always gave her the air of a person that expects an interruption, or is preparing an evasion: she had a way of gathering intelligence with a kind of aggressive curiosity, of repelling conjectures, and above all, of looking over her left shoulder when anybody was talking to her at the right, that raised an impression of disquiet, of which sensation she seemed to have been



intended as the type. I own I imagined that during this last habitually nervous *tic*, she expected the reappearance of Ancelot de Revel, and that her conscience needed the perpetual satisfaction of certifying his absence.

As she took upon herself the whole charge of Monsieur de San Maglori, and he being of a natural timid character, allowed her direction in everything, Valérie had little exertion to make, and more facility in regaining the equilibrium of her spirits. On the morning of the wedding, I heard Madame Langlier, the governess, presume sufficiently upon their improvement to compliment Valérie on the conquest she had made over herself, and to assure her she saw in her tranquillity of demeanour a proof of her mind being at peace, and freed from all regrets.

And though Valérie answered this ill-timed compliment rather sharply, by reminding Langlier, that she had not been sufficiently con-

fidential upon the subject to authorize a conclusion of one kind or another, she gratuitously reassured me as we went down stairs, saying :

“Believe me, Diane, that nothing could have induced me to go through this, if my heart were not completely divested of its past illusions : my future husband possesses all my esteem, and all the regard I am now capable of feeling.”

I believe she felt exactly as she said. Through both the ceremonies, legal and ecclesiastical, I could only discern a look of serious candour in Valérie’s countenance, that betokened her heart to be steadied, but not blighted.

She was, indeed, very serious—very still ; and after we went home she did not say to any one a word more than was a matter of necessity.

When, however, it came to our farewell, and as she tore herself from my arms, her parting counsel was :

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“ Marie-toi, ma bonne Diane ; il n’y a que cela à faire. Toi aussi, sois raisonnable. Prends ton parti là-dessus.”

So we separated, and we had both much to go through before we met again.

## CHAPTER XI.

Oh cielo !

Che miro ? . . . . Oimè ! . . . .

WHEN Valérie was no more at home ; when I was left without her companionship in my pursuits, and had no longer her cares and anxieties to divide my attention, Montferrand's society and conversation insensibly supplied her place. I believe, as I have said, that he talked well, but he was easier to talk with, than anybody it had fallen to my lot to converse with, and the time so occupied used to pass imperceptibly.

He brought me drawings to copy ; compo-

sitions that he had made from scenes in his southern travels ; explained to me the effects of light and scenery which his pencil had traced, and criticised or praised my attempts to reproduce them. I felt such an engrossing interest in this employment, that for a time I gave up everything else to it ; and was inspired with so much emulation by his encouragement, as to improve rapidly in an art for which I had but a very ordinary share of natural facility.

The more, however, this sympathetic intimacy increased, the nearer it seemed to its close. Montferrand was engaged in some literary researches, relative to his intended journey, and their completion was all that detained him here. As the rest of his time was passed at the Marshal's house, I might but for this consideration have seen the necessity or prudence of less constant meetings ; but I was careless of that, because it seemed to be my risk only that was involved in the intercourse, and my loss for the future. This is the usual way

of thinking: there is nothing new in it, and it is as little new to prefer the present to what may never come.

I was very happy—at least, as happy as fate permitted in a life that was never straight and plain. The desolate remonstrance of Job sometimes recurred to me. “He hath fenced up my path so that I cannot pass.” And when it did, I envied those conditions of life, however humble, whose duties and whose destiny agreed, and whose habits and feelings were all in unison, and presented either no choice or no uncertainty. The idea of extricating myself from my engagement with Lismore never occurred to me, either as a feasible or honourable line to attempt; but the oftener I thought upon the circumstance, the more doubtful the result seemed of realisation. He wrote but at lengthened intervals: the matter of his letters referred entirely to every day subjects of life, treated in the light flowing style he adapted to all ques-

tions, even those of finance, which excited him the most gravely; and this now rare correspondence gave the idea of some one who rather forces an interest in what is passing far from the spot where his whole mind is rivetted. His association with my fate was growing gradually weaker in my mind, and it seemed to me very natural that the predilection he had felt for me, or fancied under the circumstances he had felt, for one in whom he could only remember the engaging qualities of a child, should likewise have passed away with interests more engrossing, and suited to his habits. I expected that, either through my father, who had sanctioned the engagement long ago, and with whom Lismore remained in continual intercourse, or on some opening or another, this might be brought to a mutual explanation; and seeing that he never reverted in his letters to the idea of returning to France, this impression fixed itself more firmly in my mind.

Meanwhile, I felt that every passing circumstance of our domestic life was open to the comments of Madame Clécy; and only hoped she was too much occupied with the engagements consequent upon the new connexion she had formed, to attend to me. She neither looked tranquil nor satisfied with the result of her management; which I attributed for a time to the weight of responsibility she had usurped over her daughter's happiness. She undeceived me on that score, entering abruptly on the subject one morning after breakfast, when a letter had been brought me from Valérie, which she desired to read—and inquired on returning it—"What was it you heard of Monsieur de Revel?—that he had been seen in Paris?"

"Nobody," I replied, "has even mentioned his name to me."

"They have done wisely: the affair has given rise to the most ridiculous reports, which I have tried ineffectually to silence. Some have

gone so far as to declare that a duel had taken place between the two rivals for my daughter's hand. Others, that in case of Valérie's persistence in her foolish attachment, the Marshal intended to make over all his fortune to you ! The greatest absurdity has been the qualifying a childish flirtation by such a name."

"Valérie's marriage is sufficient of itself to silence all reports," I answered.

"I fear not, and believe they are spread by the relations of the Duke de San Maglori. Some of them look very shy of me, and give the most barbarous interpretations to my conduct. Had I not secured the happiness of my child, I should feel it deeply ; but the heart of a mother is impenetrable to malice of that kind. A letter such as that is balm to every feeling of irritation."

Now, Valérie's letter had been the most matter of fact in the world ; therefore I observed, "*She* says nothing about her happiness."

"She never expresses her feelings," said

Madame Clécy. "I have always read hers better than she knew how to explain them ; but she speaks of mine, and that is the amiable side of my Valérie's character.

"She had her faults, indeed ; she tried me sadly ; but I have forgiven her that. She was a perpetual subject of anxiety, and our friends—alas ! friends are always of that description—destroyed my peace by affirming that I had no control over her ; that she was neglected ; that she had too much liberty ; that she would end with some hare-brained marriage that would break my heart. How little they knew her—indeed, how little they knew us both."

I made no reply ; and after an instant, Madame Clécy resumed the subject uppermost in her mind.

"The opinion of society, indeed ! The labours of Hercules were not more frightful than the task we impose upon ourselves to propitiate it. Impossible to know how far you



have advanced. As fast as one suffrage is gained, another is wanting ; and when to the envy of your acquaintance is added the opposition of a daughter, one has too many difficulties to face. However, I hope Valérie may be an example to you. We have had enough vexation of this kind for one year."

I merely answered, that "I was unlikely to cause any," and pushing away my chair, sauntered towards the window. When I turned from it after a little interval, thinking the conversation might now be considered at an end, it was to stumble against Madame Clécy, who had followed me, and had been looking over my shoulder.

"I could not think what engaged you so attentively," she said, "what do you see there?"

"A few dead shrubs in the garden," I answered, "and a cloudy sky."

"Surely you made a sign to somebody."

"I have no acquaintance that come in that way."

I meant nothing more than what I said at the instant, but she coloured angrily, and after a pause, asked :

"Do you refer to what passed the other day in my house?"

"No," I said, "I only spoke of myself."

"I always intended to ask what made you bring me back the bouquet that morning?"

"I thought you would like to have it," I said hesitatingly.

"Pray did you see anything in it?"

"A bit of paper."

"Did you read it?" she cried, seizing me by the arm.

"Ah ! Madame, you frighten me," was all I could say. She let my arm drop, looked very much disconcerted at having been betrayed into such vehemence, and then resumed, in a half-irritable, half-coaxing tone :


“ You really would oblige me inexpressibly by saying what the paper contained : it was a memorandum of some consequence, and I have lost it ”

I did not believe the latter part of her speech, but I answered without making any difficulties : “ I recollect seeing some figures upon the paper, and a signature. I cannot now be sure of the sum or the name.”

In fact, I had glanced at it so cursorily as only to have retained the word “ Jean ” in my memory, and the simplicity with which the answer was made seemed to calm Madame Clécy. She said, with an air of studied indifference, and yet precision :—

“ It is a pension I pay to an old soldier, who served under the Marshal, and he is too proud to let it be known : now I have something more important than that to talk of.”

She again seated herself, and I tried for an instant to analyse or account both for the sudden



agitation of the preceding instant, and the desertion of her presence of mind the other morning. For there was no reason to oppose disbelief to the assertion she had just made ; it tallied in every point with what I had heard take place in her room, and had read on the paper. Why had she not explained this fact at once ! My mind was roused from the subject by the mention of Montferrand's name ; it was of him she intended to speak.

“Although there is nothing in the world I consider so painful as to distress other people—a line I in fact always avoid if possible, because it really makes one hated where one wishes to be loved—I cannot resist pointing out to you the folly of encouraging this useless admirer. Your prospects are certainly not within my jurisdiction ; and if they were, the world would not consider it incumbent upon me to provide for you as I have done for my own daughter—that, I am convinced, you must understand.

Neither I, however, nor the Marshal, could relinquish without pain the idea of your forming a match suitable to your pretensions, and in short every way unobjectionable. My unfeigned and never-ceasing solicitude to secure this, you seem, however, determined to oppose."

"I did not know that I was giving you so much trouble," I began; but Mme. Clécy stopped what I might have added, by saying:

"Oh, do not let us enter into details of that kind: I know what I am about, and am the best judge of what I do for the promotion of your welfare, and how to superintend it. On that account only, I think it indispensable to inquire whether you can reasonably contemplate a marriage with this young man?"

I looked up at her with an invincible repugnance to answer such a question. Madame Clécy was not looking at me; she was very busy making a list of the visits she had to return; it could not have been thought by her

manner that she attached much interest to the question she had asked. But receiving no answer, she raised her eyes, met mine, and then I shook my head without speaking.

“ I don’t understand you,” she said, and starting from her occupation rejoined ; “ either you hope it, or you expect it, or you intend it. I am not surprised that you are ashamed to acknowledge anything so absurd ; but I must form my own opinion of your silence, so will the Marshal.”

I here replied very calmly, and very gravely :

“ I do not mean to marry Juste Montferrand ; you can tell the Marshal, if you please, that I say so, and that Montferrand has not asked it.”

She tried to steady her restless, curious eyes upon me, while she said :

“ You will change that opinion ?”

“ Never.”

I turned my head away, when I had spoken—

something in her countenance gave me a sort of recoil. The obstinacy with which she pursued the subject also disturbed me very much. I knew she did not care for me, and I was alarmed at the immediate change in her manner on my decisive answer. Madame Clécy, like Louis XI. of France, concealed joy less easily than pain:—she became suddenly unreserved and jocose.

“Diane, I have always praised your sense—your taste: I see that nobody imposes upon you. Oh! that cunning heart of yours! it is not easily run away with. You know you take us all in, with your demure little air and pensive eyes. So like the shrewdness of your father! I was left out in the family distribution. My poor head never helped me. I have no presence of mind—no penetration. I really think I should live a hundred years, and never see that anybody was not what he appeared to be. As for Juste Montferrand,

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now that I can really speak of him to you as I feel, I shall acknowledge that the Marshal's pertinacious weakness in that quarter provokes me. He sticks to some absurd recollections of a friendship as old as the streets (and of course dissolved), for the object has been dead these twenty years; and insists upon founding the career and fortunes of this young man, for his father's sake. I acknowledge that I think it was a little bit on your account too. The Marshal is sentimental, and obstinate where one least expects it. I have intercepted, however, an appointment just in time—one that I have been canvassing for during three years, and which I found he was on the point of obtaining for Montferrand. No power would have changed the Marshal's determination, had I not luckily known of an inferior one, which I at length prevailed on him to offer in its stead, knowing it was what Juste would be too proud to accept. That is not our fault; the Marshal



has satisfied his responsibility, and my candidate, a most useful friend, is now provided for."

Before I could recover from this *ingenuous* revelation, upon which Madame Clécy prided herself too much to require an answer, Montferrand appeared at the door. She had ceased speaking, and returned to her occupation the instant she heard a step, and now addressed him with a smiling aspect, and a caressing voice :

"Come in, and don't be surprised if we look very grave. Now that I have lost one of my children, I cannot take too much care of the other. In fact, Valérie was such a giddy girl that she has taught me to be tiresome ; and though there is nothing so natural as a little coquetry—a thoughtless love of admiration ; though I know *you* all encourage it, and think it charming, yet I am obliged to be severe about it."

With a playful tap on the shoulder, Mme. Clécy left me to improve by this hint, and began to talk upon the weather and the news. I must, indeed, have looked very grave when Juste entered the room, nor was it dispersed by her speech. Whether or not it had the same effect on him, his share in the conversation that succeeded was certainly unusually concise and unanimated. At last, doubtful whether the abstraction arose from anything he might have to speak of relating to his private affairs, I got up, and left them.

A week or two later, Montferrand himself told me the circumstances that Mme. Clécy had previously related. He said, in the candid though careless way in which he always spoke of his own interests, that he had more than once, in discussions upon his prospects, expressed to the Marshal, that he would willingly accept the appointment above mentioned, if it were at his option; that it was almost the only one that was adapted to his tastes and bent of


education, and which he knew that his extensive travels and knowledge of foreign languages fitted him to undertake. He said he had been momentarily wounded by the Marshal's neglect of his interests ; and had been more susceptible of the annoyance, from his having offered him, at the very time this post was in his power, another in all respects ineligible, and accessible to the rawest capacity.

He added, that it was one of these disappointments that strengthen inward independence ; that he had recognised the inaptitude of his character for any other life than the one he had first chosen, and that this deviation from his convictions had been the means of rendering them more determined : he should rely upon his own powers, and never oppose their intuition again. He shewed no bitterness against the Marshal ; and Mme. Clécy having been the intermediatrix upon the proposal of the lesser appointment, he had only transmitted through her his resignation of it.

I asked if he had expressed what he felt on this occasion to Mme. Clécy. He said he had perhaps done so more openly than it was worth, for she had felt that it was a grievance; had been much annoyed, and offered to attempt by her influence to repair it—a proposition he had naturally rejected. Struck by the contrast of this version with the one that had been given me, as well as by Montferrand's reliance upon the good intentions that prompted the offer of Mme. Clécy, I asked myself which of us could have heard aright, and whether it were not due to the Marshal to say that the case had been subjected to two interpretations. The fear, however, of exciting needless suspicion, of creating mischief, the carelessness Montferrand showed upon the subject, the sanguine conviction that he was beyond Mme. Clécy's power of harming in any other way, checked the utterance of this explanation, and the matter, having ceased to affect Montferrand, was again for a time forgotten.

Some months elapsed without any material change occurring in our lives. Satisfied with the result of her interrogations, Mme. Clécy did not interfere with the disposal of my time, and only profited by my disinclination for the world, to renew and accumulate her own engagements. I was indifferent to the observations she might make about me, and was compelled to believe that her inquiries had arisen from some dispute with her husband, on the destination of the said appointment, and that his assent to her wishes about it had depended upon the answer I should make.

It was a painful reflection to me, that that answer should have stood in the way of Montferrand's prospects ; and the thought of the Marshal having been ready to make that a condition for my sake, which he was not capable of insisting upon for him, provoked as much as it pained me. Marshal Clécy never himself entered upon the subject to me, though I



fancied for a little while afterwards, that his usual kind and paternal manner was tinged with a shade of disappointment. He did not talk to me any more about marrying; only sometimes, when saying he was lucky that I too had not deserted him, he used to add:

“Tu as cependant tort; tu fais trop la difficile.”

I fell now more than ever indeed to his care: he used to ride and walk with me every day, and some new object of interest or amusement was always brought forward by him or Montferrand in which I could participate. Paris has innumerable resources, easy of access to those whose tastes are guided, and their fancies consulted, as mine were then. Every day arose brighter than the preceding one, by all that had gone before it; and the mind thus soothed and flattered, I let things take their course, trusting for the rest to a future whose desolation did not stare upon me, only because the darkness that veiled it was impenetrable.

When we were again settled in Paris, the winter after my cousin's marriage, I was within a few months of being twenty years of age. Valérie and her husband were then in Italy, where they intended to pass a whole year.

And now some slight warnings roused me to the fragility of the tenure by which I had seized upon this world's happiness. First, they came in the shape of a thousand petty vexations and annoyances at the hand of Mme. Clécy. She had never loved me ; perhaps saw in me, from the beginning, the incarnate retribution of her hidden sins, and could not forbear to spite me. Perhaps she had thought that after my positive denegation of entering into any engagement with Juste Montferrand, our mutual predilection for each other's society must die away, or at any rate his partiality for me resolve itself into indifference or a separation ; and the continued equanimity of our intercourse was more than she could endure.

It was natural enough that this preference

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should be irritating to a vain woman who desired to attract general admiration, and had used some art to secure his attentions for herself; though I must say he never seemed to have been conscious of her devices, and had treated her always with such simplicity and consideration, that nothing in his demeanour was calculated to wound her self-love. This did not prevent her from making the position of both of us as annoying as her power allowed. Montferrand, little used to the ways of the world, neither understood the point of her manœuvres, nor was in any way vulnerable to them. But my claims upon his regard were unfortunately so weak and so unstable; the value I had for it placed me so much at the mercy of every shaft and stone a rough hand might please to fling, that I could oppose but a tremulous resistance to her attacks. Besides, she knew me to be unfit to cope with her by artifice or subtlety. Sometimes, indeed, my



unexpected sincerity would throw her back ; but she had no sooner recovered it, than again she plunged into new wiles and tortuous ways of giving annoyance ; till I, who had always so much trouble in fixing my mind upon the positive and material side of life, used to wonder how she found time for the invention of so many littlenesses. It seemed as if she thought our friendship had some ulterior motive in it that militated against her—in fact, saw it more in the light of a conspiracy than a sympathy, and one against which she was to guard herself.

Of course, under these circumstances I got out of her way as much as possible. I used to manage to accompany the Marshal alone to the “Bouffons,” at an early hour. It was an amusement for which Mme. Clécy cared very little, and she seldom passed more than half an hour there, after she had dressed for the visits and assemblies of the evening. We had


not long got into this habit, when she altered her routine, and forbade my going without her, ordering her carriage at the same time as that of the Marshal, so that I could not even repine to him at the arrangement.

One evening she kept me waiting, of course : the first act was over when we got to the opera ; Montferrand was already there, and I crept into my seat in the corner, which he had occupied for me, and gave a piteous shrug at the drawn curtain on the stage. The house was crowded for a new opera. We had time to look about us, and hear it criticised, before the singing recommenced. In the course of the same interval Montferrand casually directed my attention to some face or another that he had remarked amongst the audience in the parterre.

It was one of Mme. Clécy's peculiarities, that she never saw an opera-glass fixed for an instant without looking in the same direction, or asking who it was at. This time, although engaged in con-

versation with a visitor in the box, she ceased listening to the person who addressed her, and leant forward to know whom we were interested about; I replied that it really was nobody worth looking at.

My companion, perceiving that she was not satisfied with such an answer, laughed, and added, that it was one of the audience he had pointed out to my observation and had noticed more than once himself, from the whimsical coincidence of his likeness to me in feature. At the moment I had raised my glass, this individual, who was seated just beyond the orchestral stalls, was so turned that his face was in the shade, and I had not discerned it, only having had time to see that it referred to a youth dressed in the shabby yet somewhat pretentious style of the students and artists with which Paris abounds. Montferrand as he gave this little explanation, at the same time referred to the opinion of Mme. Clécy for the



accuracy of his remark. She not only refused to confirm the observation, but, after an instant of repressed dissatisfaction and annoyance, made some pretext for our changing places, and gave me her seat on the other side of the box. While effecting this move, she said, with a certain asperity, and in that tone, "*à la cantonade*," which is meant for confidential publicity, that nothing could be more indecorous than for a young lady to level an opera-glass at the parterre, and that I took the opportunity of convincing her that she had allowed me too much liberty, by causing her such an embarrassment in public. She then made a gesture with her fan that I was to sit very far back, and half concealed by the curtain of the box, while I thought she added, in a real whisper, that she hoped soon to be relieved of such a charge. Her speech and manner mortified me particularly, and I did not recover my spirits till she had gone away, which happened while

it was yet early in the evening. As soon as she had quitted us, Montferrand again referred to the subject of his observation, and I, thinking I might then venture upon the incongruity for which I had met with such an undeserved reproof, took the opera-glass that he offered, and fixed it at the object he had pointed out.

The youth I looked at, was about seventeen years of age—at least the effeminacy of his countenance opposed the idea of his being older: he was a pale, eager, half-famished looking boy, with bright, intelligent eyes. The sickly light of the theatre, that detached his face and head from the dingy mass of heads around him, gave something almost transparent to the tint of his features; and this, with the length of his thick, dark hair, worn after the German fashion, which those young men in France generally copied, had, I supposed, suggested to Montferrand the notion of a womanly resemblance. I could see no other way of accounting

for it; and I only delayed any observation because I could not tell what kind of disagreeable impression the boy's face recalled to me. It dawned upon my mind while I kept looking at him. More than a year had intervened since—more than two years, from the night of the ball at the Hotel D—. But that was where I had first seen this boy: then, he was hanging upon the lamp-post, bold, ragged, and merry. I had seen him again at the “Mare d'Auteuil;” and again at the door of the theatre, he had flung the alms I had offered him, back in my face.

There was a still stronger certainty to my mind of his identity—that of an older, and very common-looking man seated beside him, whose face never would have recurred to my recollection, except from the fact of my having been interrupted by the presence of the two together, while I was drawing in the wood.

I cannot say why I felt persuaded, even

before the youth turned his eyes to our box, which he did a moment later, that I had been already recognised by him. The encounter caused me a transitory, perhaps, a puerile feeling of annoyance ; and determined not to look in that direction again, I drew back from his glittering eyes, and was turning to restore Montferrand's glass, and to tell him I was not flattered by the resemblance, when my own eyes fell by chance upon the small window in the door of the box—and fixed there, glazed, and rivetted, I saw another face ! In *that* face my memory was not puzzled or confused : there was no change there—that face was Lismore's : I knew it well. And still I stared, as people stare who strain their sight across a cloud or veil. A mist came spreading up before me, but I looked through it. I could not see whether the eyes had fixed on me, before the head vanished from the round opening of the glass—it had

been a momentary vision, but *it had been there.*

I sate stiff up, my eyes wide open upon that vacant space, wondering, as if it had shown me another world, whither I must go. I felt as if everything in this had fallen away from me at a stroke. What else I felt I cannot say. The only sound I heard, the only movement I was conscious of, was my heart knocking at my side. I heard *that*, and then I looked towards Montferrand ; and I suppose he was pale, for he was gazing at me with extreme surprise and emotion. I could not face his looks ; the opera-glass, which I still held out, dropped from my hand, and I turned away. He asked if I was ill ? I said "*very.*" I did not know what I said : I could not keep it to myself : I writhed, not figuratively, but like one in pain.

"Will you come away," he said ; "shall I look for the carriage?"

"No, no, don't go—we must not go—stay here."



I could not have passed through that door. I was near telling him to bolt it, and then recollected myself in time.

I can't think now how I did it : I put out my hand ; his closed upon it. At the time, there seemed nothing strange in this.

And yet, that act was a confession ; one that ought never to have passed between us ! it never would, if we had not been frightened into it. It was a sin.

The pressure of his hand restored me to myself. I trembled as I drew it back, but I was already becoming calm. The terror of the spirits had subsided ; my senses had re-seized the reality of the images around me. Everybody was not gone.

I don't think I uttered another word through the evening, only making a sign to Montferrand's inquiries from time to time that I was better ; and now and then furtively I glanced towards the window, dreading what might be there. Fortunately the door was not open again during

the evening. We went away before the crowd, and no unwelcome sight met us in the corridors or vestibule. I was ill ; and I felt if I had been Juste Montferrand, though *he* had made no comment, that *I* should have attributed the singularity of such a seizure to some moral cause.

Arriving at home, my first determination was to look at the cards and superscriptions of all the letters left for Mme. Clécy ; and then I sent to the porter's lodge to know if any were there for me, or had been kept back. Not a card, a note, or letter appeared to have any connexion with Lismore. I waited for Mme. Clécy's return : I did not gather that she or the Marshal had heard anything about him. Why should they hide it ? Was I insane ? No ; I had seen him.

The morrow passed ; the Saturday we had no box at the Italians, and I should not have dared to go again. The Sunday—Monday passed.

On Tuesday morning, a note was brought from Mr. Lismore, announcing himself to be just arrived in Paris, and requesting the permission of the Marshal and Mme. Clécy to wait upon them. It was cordially answered, and he came.

## CHAPTER XII.

Quand on a une pensée, on la retrouve en tout.

VICTOR HUGO.

WHEN Lismore was announced, I was in Madame Clécy's drawing-room with her, and I was able to receive him with suitable composure, and even with a degree of cordiality. He was on his part very kind, and unembarrassed. The Maréchale, while she addressed herself to him, made me at first the subject of conversation ; and I could see that although he endeavoured to avoid the appearance of scrutinising my looks and demeanour, he was occupied with nothing else.

When Madame Clécy was tired of the visit, she pleaded an engagement; and begging Lismore to return to dinner, and not to quit the house without renewing his acquaintance with the Marshal, she left us together.

I then inquired after my father; and seeing, for the first time, one who kept up with him a confidential intercourse, we fell into some particulars that had a new and earnest interest for me. I learnt that he was well and sanguine about the success of his speculation, although time alone could produce from it any lucrative results; and that he appeared reconciled to his present way of life and associations. From thence, Lismore, with his usual air of parental interest, questioned me upon the advantages and amusements of my existence with Madame Clécy; upon my tastes, opinions, &c. While we were talking, I could not help perusing his face, and thinking of its unexpected and fearful aspect to me at the round window of the opera-

box—to me, who was now conversing with him so calmly.

I did not dare allude to it, nor did he give me reason to understand that he had arrived in Paris on Thursday night.

While expecting his visit, my conviction had been that it must prove decisive of the future ; but it remained as vague as before his return. Neither from Lismore's manner, nor from what he said, could I in the least make out what I was to expect from him. There was no reference to our engagement ; nor had he the air either of an accepted or expecting lover ; yet there was expressed, even as it seemed unintentionally, a deadly kind of scrutiny of me, that might mean—"you are mine, whenever I choose to lay my hand upon you ;" or it might mean, " I will wait and see whether I can, with prudence, claim a bargain, of which I may repent."

His guarded manner might be intended to

show his power, or to preserve his independence ; whichever was the case, it was for him, not me, to claim the fulfilment of the pledge, and on that footing it must rest. If an early experience had changed me from a simple and heedless child, to a reflecting woman, I did not feel that it had brought me nearer to a level of companionship with Lismore than heretofore. In worldly wisdom and in the business of life, he was as much beyond me as ever ; in society he was still a coxcomb. He wore a very stiff cravat, which I abhorred ; more rings than anybody else ; and he had kept up the phrases and modes of talking of his own day, which now appeared quite obsolete.

This new comer was closely watched by Montferrand. He seemed puzzled as to the light in which he was to be regarded ; if not from the emotion I had shown at the Opera—for I did not ascertain that its cause had been penetrated by him—it was from the manner of

both Madame Clécy and the Marshal, who apparently taking for granted that Lismore was likely to renew the engagement formerly broken, received him immediately on terms of intimacy in the house. I was relieved that Madame Clécy did not ask many questions ; and as she had obviously no personal prepossession in Lismore's favour, and thought little of him as an acquisition to her society, yet encouraged his coming on every possible occasion, I supposed she was pleased at the idea of my being removed, if such a marriage occurred, from her care. In our family circle, she conversed with him readily enough upon all that was passing, and initiated him in the histories of those he was unacquainted with.

I heard him ask her who "that Montferrand was ? and how she had known him ;" and remarked the willingness with which she profited by the occasion—after saying that he was the son of a friend of her husband's who had died in



battle—to add that he was a young man full of visionary ideas; and that these had been allowed by the weak partiality of the Marshal to gain such ascendancy, that they had ended by entirely unfitting him for social life.

“He appeared to be a man of a certain degree of merit and capacity,” was Lismore’s rejoining comment. “Had he any career? any prospect of getting on in the world?”

“No; he had rejected the assistance of his friends, and would not be shackled by ties of any kind.”

“Any private fortune?”

“Barely an independence; was not likely to enrich himself.”

“Hem! sorry to hear it; a fine looking young man, apparently by no means devoid of intellectual attainments, or energy of character; but without purpose, as is often the case. No profession? Really?”

Madame Clécy answered, “She should have

wished to have seen him employed by the Government, if he could have agreed with their views."

"Has he any political opinions?"

"Alas! One of the many who opposed everything—without affections, without an object: that was the deplorable part of his character; a head that sought only difficulties, danger, and excitement. He was now bent upon a foreign expedition; in the course of these kind of adventures he would meet with some untimely end. He was too rash not to be his own victim."

The latter part of this phrase was meant to be inaudible to me. But Madame Clécy had always a motive in what she said; therefore, her replies must have been aimed at the interest she supposed likely to be uppermost in Lismore's mind; although, in the careless tone of his inquiries nothing was discernible. Every day she showed him a more marked attention.

I ought to have dreaded her making use of such intimacy to arouse his jealousy, had it not seemed to me that he was impervious to a sensation of that nature. She herself also treated me with such variations of alternate kindness that, on the whole, I believed she regarded me with a certain degree of fondness, which I had not always well interpreted.

My life was very strange ; I mean the life within, which we ourselves only know, and which gives the tone and colour to what others see but in the outline.

I can fancy now, that I read in the eyes of half-tamed animals an affinity with the sensations then habitual to my existence ; and I seemed to have more in common with them than with my fellow-beings. Their vague and homeless instinct of intended harm from others, was mine. An uncertainty on whom to rely ; impulses of confidence ; a hasty drawing back ; transitory effusion, sudden hesitation, suspicion,

wonder, and fits of undefined scrutiny, by turns filled up these harassing days—kept my senses on the alert, and isolated me from any close relationship.


Such a state of vacillating insecurity imbued me with the kind of courage that likewise belongs to the lower species of creation—the merely instinctive courage of self-defence in extreme circumstances, and the tame power of endurance. I acted vaguely, as occasion required—never attempted to help myself; but like brave and inoffensive animals, when attacked, I bit or growled, though without venom; and then sank back supinely upon my fate.

Meanwhile, the Marshal had fallen into some trouble from the disposal of the appointment which he had withheld from Montferrand. It had been very unpopularly awarded: the character of the individual was in fact open to comment, and some of the many censurers

that surround men in a public station laid hold of the circumstance to give a mercenary colour to the motives of the Marshal in such a choice.

The opposition papers teemed with abuse; the cause was reprehensively cited in the Chambers, and society naturally echoed the political clamour of the day.

The Marshal, who had no doubt acted both against his judgment and his feelings, did not resist the attack in the way his reputation and experience would have left his friends to expect. He seemed completely brow-beaten by the voices that were raised against him, and Madame Clécy, in whose artificial organization prudence had proved deficient, now knew not what concessions to make, or to which party she could address herself, to conjure the threatened injury to her husband's weight in public life, and to her own social influence.



The Marshal's abilities were not of a kind to answer with effect the accusations—more of inference than positive declaration—made by his adversaries. He had no son to speak in his defence. Montferrand alone could take such a part: perhaps, he did it more advantageously from their being unconnected by the ties of blood.

I can vouch for the effect of the answer that was drawn up by him in justification of the Marshal, not only for its success in clearing away all interested imputations upon his conduct, but also in showing that a cabal had been formed against him, and in bringing it by this means into ridicule and discredit. The youth, the spirit, and the affection of Montferrand, became so well the cause he had undertaken that they added to his victory. I acknowledge that the triumph of his appeal did not touch me so deeply as the impulse by which it had been prompted. I feel certain that, when he found

the Marshal vituperated, he had not the slightest effort of forbearance to make; that the apparent indifference he had felt in the neglect of his personal prospects recurred to him no longer in the light of an injustice, or even as a disappointment, and that the derogatory motives assigned to the choice of a higher candidate were felt by all as a provocation he was impelled to resent with all his faculties, and at the risk of his life.

None listened more greedily than I did to the encomiums lavished upon Montferrand's powerful and manly defence by honourable well-judging men; but I admired most, that he had never thought of himself.

The Marshal's feelings quite overcame him; and Madame Clécy, relieved from a fever of apprehensive anxiety, recognized the obligation with momentary effusion. Compliments, visits of congratulation assailed her, and she herself was prodigal of amiability and smiles. I could

not have supposed the moment of reaction from so many painful sensations would have been the one chosen by her to take a mischievous part toward others ; but against a character so absorbingly selfish, transitory emotions are but a poor security.

Montferrand had not, since the occurrence, paid us an evening visit, and on the third day of his absence I was slipping out of the room, when Madame Clécy whispered to me : " Do not go away. Juste Montferrand promised he would come to-night." I then sat down again and began to work, with my tapestry frame supported against the back of another chair. By the time the room was thinned of most of its occupants, somebody dropped into that chair without speaking. I knew it was Montferrand before I looked up, and turned to offer him a silent congratulation which he understood and accepted. When a little later the Marshal had engaged him in conversation, my eye again



glanced over the room, and I saw that the party had entirely dispersed.

Madame Clécy was seated just by us. She was, at the moment I perceived her, whispering with a confidential air to Lismore. He was arranging a screen for her, and I inadvertently caught his eye, when he stooped, as if to look at what he was about, but I thought, in order to avoid my notice. Madame Clécy began instantly in an animated voice to dilate upon the details of her evening party; enumerating such of her acquaintances as she supposed to have absented themselves from vexation at the Marshal's success; and Montferrand, whom she addressed, made some jest upon the embarrassment of his enemies, diverting in that way the lively expression of the Marshal's feelings, who could not refrain from repeatedly congratulating himself upon what he termed the filial devotion of Juste.

He did not perceive, while dwelling upon this

view of the case, that his interruptions became irksome to Madame Clécy. After fidgeting about the room for some time, and turning her bracelets round, as is done on the stage when the ingenuous confessions of genteel comedy are about to be heaved from an overburthened bosom, she laughed, and hemmed, and jokingly said: "I do not wonder you are proud of Montferrand's attachment. I don't wonder you take it all for yourself: I am quite convinced he would do *any thing* in the world for your sake. Come, I will say *every thing* in the world, except tell us who first inspired the idea of that article in the *Débats*. I believe it is hardly a fair question. We must content ourselves with the result."

"What can you mean?" said the matter-of-fact Marshal; at which she continued sorting some papers she held, and provokingly nodding her head without an answer.

Montferrand quitted his chair so abruptly

that my tapestry frame was thrown against my nose; and while he was making excuses for the surprise his movement had caused, the Marshal, not knowing whether his wife had spoken in jest or earnest, asked again, much perplexed, "What am I to think of this? Is there some mystery that I am not to hear? Diane!" he added, looking with the sudden playfulness of a bright idea at me,—“What have you to say?”

“That justice alone could have suggested the idea of refuting a calumny; that I hope Monsieur Montferrand, who understands that so well, will never need anybody to do the same for him.”

Madame Clécy looked rather startled; but the Marshal taking it kindly said, “Tu as raison, mon enfant; c’est très bien dit.” Then, kissing my forehead, left us—according to his custom of retiring before the rest of the family—to pursue the conversation as we choose. It did not drop here; for Lismore taking up one

of the papers of the day, began to read an eulogium on Montferrand's speech, with one or two extracts from it, and in conclusion remarked, with a formal bow to him, "Whatever personification may have been chosen by Justice, you are happy to have been so well inspired."

Montferrand returned the inclination ironically, saying, "And to be so encouraged."

"Ah!" cried Madame Clécy, "that is quite a wrong view of the subject—men have nothing to do with inspiration or encouragements; that is all that belongs to us of greatness; and unhappily we are sure to use it against ourselves, which shows that we are weak, even where we are most sublime."

"Not in this instance, at least," said Lisimore, "for you must then have intended to reveal your own influence and boast of its success."

"How? Do you suspect me of such an application? I assure you that curiosity had

more part in my question than vanity: I feel an interest in the subject."

Montferrand did not seem to think this frivolous disquisition worth attention; he turned to me again, and spoke of other things. Lismore drew near, and listened. I could not talk, and answered without carrying on what was said. Lismore still stood by, and after a moment or two of apparent reflection, said to Montferrand, "I appreciate your enthusiasm; it is the characteristic feature of your writing. A rare endowment—essential to the illusions of life, but sometimes treacherous."

"I conclude by the remark," answered Montferrand, smiling, "that all yours has long ago evaporated."

"Perhaps," returned Lismore, "the same conclusions will, before many years have passed over your head, apply to you."

"That must rest upon the cause, or rather the subjects that may have roused it."

"Exactly so," he answered blandly.

"And how do you know," interfered Madame Clécy, "to whom your predictions may refer? You have just shown that you can make a wrong guess. May you not also be an unwelcome prophet!"

"At least," he replied, "my words are too vague to give offence."

"Not so: general warnings are the most dangerous of all—people are sure to attribute them in the way we least expect."

"Have I been so unfortunate as to hit upon a meaning?" asked Lismore keenly of Montferrand.

"I," said Juste, "attached no *sense* to your words."

"So much the better," joined in Madame Clécy; "the feelings ought never to be attacked in conversation: it is always painful to me when they are brought into notice, and I envy those who are invulnerable to the observations

and attention they excite. Where are you going, Diane? you break up the party, which I cannot allow."

"I did not think I was wanted any more: this is the second time you have asked me to stay."

"You are ungrateful to require so much pressing, when you know that your society gives pleasure to others. I considered this evening a 'fête de famille.'"

"It is over now," I observed more to myself than to her, and hoping Montferrand would take the hint; but at the same time I was struck by hearing Madame Clécy half whisper to him: "You do not comprehend my maternal duties: we poor mothers are always at our post." This made me return to my seat, and in a state of undefined curiosity; while Lismore on the other side resumed the conversation with Montferrand, saying—

"I must entreat you to remember that it was

a casual conjecture upon which I ventured just now—a purely fortuitous opinion—rather than a warning, and which I should not be the one least enchanted of the party to find erroneous.”

“If you *have* any meaning,” returned Montferrand, knitting his brows, “I should be obliged to you to make it clear.”

Lismore answered; “we are all supposed to be in danger from the defects to which our good qualities expose us. Penetrated with the truth of this theory from self-experience, our short acquaintance has led me to suspect that, to the brilliant talents for which you are conspicuous, a little caution might effectively be added.”

“Mr. Lismore,” replied Montferrand, “I cannot but accede to any opinion you may have formed about your own character: it had never occurred to me to employ our short acquaintance upon its study, and I cannot imagine what interest that of mine should have afforded you.”



Here Madame Clécy again interposed in the same undertone : " Do not irritate him." Montferrand was certainly not the less ruffled of the two ; and I looked on stupified with her tactics, and wondering at their aim. With the air of diverting the conversation while only enlarging upon it, she asked if Lismore's deductions had been drawn from the general turn of character and intelligence of the French of the present day.

He said he knew nothing of the notabilities that had lately appeared ; that his acquaintance with France had been formed under a different state of things than that which now existed, and that Montferrand was indeed the only character of the actual times that had come under his observation.

"And he is hardly to be considered a type," answered Madame Clécy, "whose views and feelings are all in decided opposition to our system. It is for that reason that his talents are all but thrown away. He refuses employ-

ment under this ministry, because he cannot think with it. The very disappointment now in discussion, the Marshal has just acquainted me, was laid at his feet before he would allow it another destination; but so inflexible is opinion, that Juste will make no compromise with his."

Montferrand started, changed colour, and looked Madame Clécy full in the face, as if he had not heard her plainly.

Perhaps in answer—perhaps in deprecation of his look, she rejoined: "I know you never allow yourself to be known; but I honour independence of spirit too much, to let it pass unnoticed: I must talk of my friends as they are, and my esteem for that kind of character is so augmented by understanding all its dangers, that it literally amounts to reverence. Mr. Lisimore, do not your sentiments accord with mine?"

"They might do so," he replied, "under

certain modifications ; for instance, if I were perfectly aware what the direction of your friend's views were, political and otherwise, and upon what grounds opposed to the present state of things."

"Politically speaking, I did not know that I stood in opposition to the present system," said Montferrand. "In my opinion, its greatest fault is, that it cannot last ; for I desire nothing better than the duration of order and tranquillity, which it has failed to make secure."

"Well, what did I say ?" exclaimed Madame Clécy with a shrug.

"If that insecurity exists," observed Lismore, "it is at any rate not striking to the perception."

"We see only improvements in this capital—encouragement, employment, annual festivities, which recal favourite associations and past triumphs."

"I understand you," answered Lismore, with a sickly, insipid smile ; "you aspire to a system

of renovation : there is a social and political utopia in your brain, which contradicts the advice in the Gospel, that whoso buildeth a tower should sit down to count the cost."

"These only divert the public mind from the dangers of their condition," said Juste ; "beneath, there is no soundness—scarcely any life."

Montferrand laughed scornfully, though he evaded the sarcasm, saying : "In France we destroy a great deal, but we build up nothing. This government has but heaped ruin upon ruin. Corruption is plastered over ; it is neither investigated nor uprooted. A compromise is made with our moral health ; and the country, like a new Vesuvius, gorged with inflammable matter, must throw up these vitiated principles, ere she will be able to breathe."

"I wish people knew how to conceal their thoughts and feelings," said Madame Clécy.

"Those who feel intemperately," rejoined Lismore, "act rashly. The danger you announce, appears to me to arise simply from the want of unity in France, and of submission to *what is*. Everybody here ascribes to himself an intellectual right of legislation, and asserts equality by usurping what he has no right to claim."

"I agree with you," said Montferrand calmly. "The arrogance of opinions here is more baneful than any strength of party could be. It is our misfortune, that we are forced to have opinions for ourselves; and that, because we have not yet found a chief—a head who makes his own, the dignity of France. Till then, we may rise as individuals, but not stand as a nation. The adversity of a state breeds men; from it the well-conditioned take their vigour and their tone; the ill-organized, their insanity. Mr. Lismore, you are too happy to *conceive* our position here, who wake to

listen for the rappel at our doors and know the next sound may be the tocsin. The elements of confusion and distress, all ready to break out, and *that* not yet in sight, which alone can steer us out of danger—a man of profound convictions, and enough moral power to act up to them.”

Montferrand paused a moment: he had spoken with great earnestness, and we were all silent. Lismore was watching him furtively, while he stroked his chin; and Montferrand, catching that look, rejoined, with a slight contraction of his lip, in a sarcastic tone:

“Under your even-handed government, in England, you require less personal guarantee: there is a wide-spread credit of solidity and worth belonging to the country which we cannot claim, and it permits individuals to repose with impunity upon their relative or personal insignificance.”

The danger of this dialogue was impressing

itself upon my mind with every word that had been uttered, and I had followed its tenor with a beating heart. My anxiety was so perceptible, that it allowed Madame Clécy an advantage she made use of, saying :

“ Diane, one would fancy by your looks that you too had adopted the insurrectionary sentiments of Montferrand. He, at least, is the only person in this house from whom you could have learned them. I don’t think they are in the Marshal’s views of education.”

“ Might it not be an inference more probable,” added Lismore, with a slow and chilling accentuation, “ that Mademoiselle St. Sauveur had been the inspirer of an advocate so ardent—the guiding genius, rather than the disciple ?”

“ You are really all of you quite incomprehensible,” she returned, as if it surprised her to see him piqued, glancing first at one then at another, and then over her shoulder, in fear of some superfluous listener : “ I did not know,



Diane, that your opinions were of such importance to both these gentlemen ; so, if I have done any mischief, blame yourselves. It appears that I have much to learn."

"About whom?" I asked.

"Oh! about all three, I believe; that makes my answer the less embarrassing."

I now saw plainly that Madame Clécy's intention was to draw these men into a quarrel, and at that moment every feeling of my bosom curdled against her in a way that was hardly reconcileable with my nature. Why she took this instant to return evil for good—this opportunity for harming those who had never offended her—God only knows. I think she would have been able to explain it herself, and that she was false to the core, without knowing when or why. It was a bad hour for me, when the chain of Madame Clécy's long wound chicanery resolved itself into that one word—*Yield*—and when my stubborn heart said—*No*. We had still a moral contest to sustain, and this was its first crisis.



For an instant, I saw no way of averting the catastrophe ; all seemed coming to an issue, and who could help it ?

Lismore betrayed a kind of agitation, though it looked more like that of a person who had been thrust into an awkward position, and was put out of countenance by it. Montferrand's aspect, on the other hand, was so threatening and so terrible that it made my hair stand on end ; and as great a moral force as he employed for a momentary passive control was necessary to enable me to face the storm, when I asked firmly of Madame Clécy, " what she meant, and what she alluded to ? "

Then, rather nervously, and by way of an escape, she said she had really forgotten what led to the remark that had offended us : she believed it had been Mr. Lismore's accusing me of inspiring Montferrand's admirable defence of the Marshal, an accusation which, in my place, she should have received as a compliment.

" He could have said nothing I should wish

more to deserve," was my answer. Nobody found anything to dispute in that, and after a slight hesitation, I went on : " I have the same attachment for the Marshal that Monsieur Montferrand has. I owe him as filial an affection ; and with nearly as little claim, he has been still more to me—for I needed more—I cannot feel a bit less." Here, seeing Madame Clécy look rather crest-fallen, and observing the doubtful curiosity that mingled with Lismore's sneer, I smiled, and went up to him : " You are my father's friend," I said, " and since *he* may never have the opportunity or power of expressing all he owes to the Marshal on my account, you ought in his name to thank Monsieur Montferrand, who has defended from a false accusation, one to whom we are so much indebted." At the same time I took his hand, and placed it in that of Juste Montferrand. Lismore obeying my request, the other my wish, they shook hands, and exchanged some very civil, if not cordial words.

Madame Clécy then, wondering at the lateness of the hour, took my arm in hers, and said, as we left the room :

“ I thought you would never find out what I wanted you to do : how long you have been about it.”

“ It required a little time for reflection,” I returned ; “ but I was certain to understand it at last.”

And with this ambiguous reply, we wished each other “ Good night.”

CHAPTER XIII.

ALSWYN.

With your leave,

I have an errand for your private ear.

CLARA.

My private ear ! I have no private ear !

My ears will not be private.

PHILIP VAN ARTEVELDE.

THOUGH I had conquered for a moment some of the difficulties that environed me, it may be easily supposed that the perpetual occasions of meeting between Lismore and Montferland, with few variations from society, became to me a source of torment and anxiety for every ensuing day, and I was rather glad to hear of

the arrival of some of my mother's family connexions, to whom I should be obliged to devote both my time and civility. This was the eldest son of Mr. Tyrawley, who, with his wife, ended their first tour on the continent in Paris, in order to curtail, as they said, the time dedicated to their annual banishment. Their arrival included for me the unexpected interest of again seeing poor little Johnny Tyrawley, whose name I had never heard since the death of his father, and of whose prospects I was quite ignorant. It appeared, that he had been hitherto kept at a sort of nursery school; and as Mr. and Mrs. Tyrawley had no inclination to add this poor little boy to the number of a family perpetually on the increase, they had decided upon putting him to a school where he might be kept all the year round, out of their way. He was, in consequence of this arrangement, to be sent for as soon as they had settled the terms.

There was not the least resemblance between Mr. Tyrawley and his father, whom I had always remembered with such grateful regard. He and his wife were utterly Britannic in their views, education, and prejudices ; and the only surprise they occasioned was, that fate should have brought together two people unconnected by birth, so similar in their bias and defects in understanding, and so equally self-sufficient.

The Tyrawleys seemed to have decided that nobody out of England knew anything ; that of all the English, they knew the most ; and between themselves, Mr. Tyrawley had the superiority in his own estimation, and Mrs. Tyrawley in hers.

Mr. Tyrawley had spent three months in Paris some years ago : his wife had only passed the last week there when I returned her visit of introduction ; but they had employed the time in obtaining a rash familiarity with its localities, society, fashions, and amusements,


upon which subjects their knowledge was more perplexing to respond to than the darkest ignorance.

They had got introductions to most of the legitimist houses on the strength of the former acquaintanceship of Mr. Tyrawley's father, and were equally assiduous, in their visits to Neuilly, to the reigning powers. They were obviously going everywhere for the sake of the *after* recreation of talking about it, as they found little they understood, or—what, of course, meant in their vocabulary—that they thought worth understanding. Mr. Tyrawley was of opinion that nothing eatable was ever cooked in Paris : Mrs. Tyrawley said she had given the milliners, who had been recommended to her, some patterns for her attire, in order to teach them what was becoming, of which they had no idea, and that they were surprisingly obstinate in their dislike of copying. I ended my visit by hearing a list of the inconveniences of the

hotel where they had lodged, and of the alterations for the worse in Paris, since the time Mr. Tyrawley had spent on a visit there to his father, when "he had found himself a thorough Frenchman," which he did not in some way or other feel he was so much now, by any means.

The Marshal gave them his box at the opera, and Madame Clécy invited them frequently, though she could not bear the English.

Having never had an opportunity of learning what distinctions to make amongst them, the whole nomade tribe were in consequence viewed by her with the same kind of suspicious curiosity she would have manifested towards a Zoological Garden let loose; and as there was no particular object in hiding this prejudice, she allowed it to become manifest. I think Mrs. Tyrawley did not mollify it, by placing herself on the intimate footing (for my sake) of a connection of the family, and regaling Madame Clécy's ears continually with the anecdotes she





gathered in the houses of her royalist acquaintances, and with comments upon their dress, opinions, and conversation, mixed up with those of London, and altogether forming a heterogeneous mass of hidden parables, of which nobody ever came to the solution. That universally English partiality for talking of what every body does or says, be the proceedings ever so matter-of-fact and innocent—the retailers ever so unintentional of offence—is little understood in France, where it is admissible to talk of other people, but only when the subject can afford amusement.

The want of patience to follow the meanderings of English gossip to a harmless conclusion, has led French society to apply to the British character a reputation for uncharitableness of word, if not of deed, and Mrs. Tyrawley underwent this censure to an unlimited degree from Madame Clécy.

“ Qu'elle est donc bavarde et médisante, cette

petite femme ! quelle perfide langue ! On ne sait à qui, ni à quoi elle en veut, avec ce flot de paroles ; mais ce qu'il y a de sûr, c'est que le prochain en fait toujours les frais."

In all this, the extent of her wicked and insidious tongue's offences had probably been a summary of everybody's visits, in town and out of town, during the last seven days, and a general prospectus of their future movements. Nobody had distinguished any thing but names of men and women and places : the deduction was, that they were doing something very wrong indeed together, and that Mrs. Tyrawley was delighted to be able to tell it. It was a consoling speciality in Mrs. Tyrawley, that she had no magnetic misgivings : she was pleased with the Maréchale Clécy, and was certain that she had charmed her.

"One feels at home with your aunt : I understood her at once. She is glad to learn who every body is ; she never loses a word, and you feel with her, that she does consider you an ac-

quisition to her society. Now, between ourselves, at the hôtels C—and D—it is impossible to put in a syllable. Everybody is occupied with themselves; they care for nothing out of their own circle: it is not society,—it is so unnatural.”

I accompanied the Tyrawleys to a morning concert, given by a former acquaintance of my mother's, who had retained a partiality for me, by which I often profited. I was to sing with one of her nieces; and she begged me to invite my friends. After my part in the concert was over, I seated myself on a divan near the wall, for the chairs were so closely ranged, there was no chance of getting near Mrs. Tyrawley. I had not been there long, when one of the audience, hitherto unperceived by me, though standing in an adjoining doorway, glided among the surrounding seats till he got up to my corner. It was Ancelot de Revel. Had I desired to avoid him, it would have been impossible, he was

so bent upon obtaining my notice ; and, on my side, I hardly knew whether I ought not to allow him an opportunity of speaking for himself.

He saw my perplexity, and said, in a supplicating voice: " Surely you will not refuse to speak to me ; it may be my only opportunity ; Madame Clécy is always on the watch. And I can learn nothing from any body."

" What can you want to know of me ?" I said coldly.

" Tell me something about Valérie—I mean your cousin Madame de San Maglori. Is she happy ?"

" Happy !" I repeated in a tone of unembarrassed surprise, " how can there be any doubt of it: she is married to a man who is honoured and respected by all the world."

" Does she know why he married her ?"

" He shows that plainly by his adoration."

I did not turn my head, but I heard Ancelot de Revel snort like a wicked horse ; and then he muttered contemptuously :

"A man who takes a wife on the trust of her parents, and whose affections he has never attempted to win, cannot expect much in return."

"How agreeably he must be surprised," I observed in as negligent a tone as before.

"You don't mean what you say," he exclaimed fiercely. "Has she forgotten that I—I—but of course my name is a forbidden subject. She is taught to consider me a wretch; and nobody—you, for instance—would ever mention—would ever consent to carry her a word from me?"

I looked up steadily in his face and said, "Why not?"

He appeared confused.

"Oh! naturally," he returned; "it would be nothing that could in any way alarm you. You do me but justice in believing me incapable of abusing a kindness that would ensure my sincere, my eternal gratitude. Alas! what could I say to her now? My fate has been signed, and

if the sacrifice of my happiness were to redeem for her——”

I interrupted him, saying : “ If there is any thing that it is due to yourself to have said, make use of me. Whatever can do *you* justice will give my cousin unfeigned pleasure.”

And here I got up from my seat, intending to withdraw; but so inconveniently were we hemmed in, that retreat was impossible. Monsieur de Revel stood before me grinding his teeth and barring the outlet that might have served me to escape. He was provoked at my coolness, and I was annoyed at being kept prisoner.

“ You wish to wound my feelings,” he resumed ;—“ to torture me ! I shall not trust you. I will see her. When does she return from Italy ?”

“ I believe in June.”

“ But *will* she receive me ?” he rejoined, with an anxiety he could not suppress. “ Does she not detest—abhor me now ?”

“Valérie,” said I, shaking my head, “has no such animosity in her disposition.”

“At least—at least—she can no longer feel as she—”

He stopped, and seemed himself to understand that his eagerness had drawn him on too far. I slightly smiled, and returned in a low and yet significant voice :

“Of course, if she did, she would not see you.” Then making a gesture peremptory enough to decide him to move out of my way, for the dialogue was becoming uselessly annoying, I succeeded in quitting the seat. He tried to offer me his arm, and asked why I was so ill-disposed against him ; but I said, “I could not understand a renewal of that footing of acquaintance ; and I wondered that he did not see that those forms were either justified by a foundation of confidence, or else only sanctioned upon the supposition of a general but indifferent civility.” He was, no doubt, very angry ; but,

no longer waiting to see the effect of my words, I made an inclination of the head and went by. I then made my way to the Tyrawleys, and found their patience nearly exhausted at having been left encircled with heads, exchanging nods and compliments and observations, amongst which they had no chance of being looked at, or listened to.

They had never before been so overjoyed at seeing me. "Now, let us get away." But getting away was that day a lengthened preliminary to getting home. Mr. Tyrawley was very tiresome: he wanted a box at the Odéon, for the purpose of seeing Mademoiselle Mars, and nothing could persuade him that a box at the Odéon would not give him that gratification. He insisted upon being set down at a corner of the Rue de l'Université, that he might inquire for himself at the bureau, close by; and then it was discovered that he had confounded the Place du Palais Bourbon with the Place de l'Odéon.



Mrs. Tyrawley opined, meanwhile, that he should instead accompany her to Mademoiselle Victorine, who was then in fashion for making gowns, and afterwards escort her round the galleries of the Palais Royal.

They kept pulling the check-string every five minutes, and addressing whimsical questions to the laquais de place. They deluded themselves into recognitions of the features of celebrated ministers in every July decoration that passed; and actually made a halt before the Chinese baths, under the infatuated hallucination that it had formerly been the Hôtel de Rambouillet. At last, we set Mr. Tyrawley down at the Passage du Panorama; and as he begged to have the carriage sent for him to the entrance communicating with the Rue Rivoli, I began to indulge a hope of our losing him altogether. Mrs. Tyrawley, however, under the conviction that such excess of confidence was too rash to be maintained between themselves, smuggled

into his hand at parting, a silk pocket-handkerchief adorned with a map of the capital, with which useful study, spread out on the stones, he was discovered two hours later in a lonely street of the Faubourg Montmartre, where he was anxiously following its delineations with his cane.

## CHAPTER XIV.

And if I seem in careless mood to reck not of my doom,  
Ah, dearest friend, those smiles are but the flowers that  
deck the tomb.

Oh never, never twine with me, the hopes of thy young  
days,

For darkness lies about my path, and evil haunts my  
ways ;

And think not, tho' I love the lyre, and can awake its  
chords,—

And think not, though my thoughts are breath'd in  
Poetry's soft words,

That fancy can impart to life her unsubstantial hues,  
Or that he enjoys reality who woos a fabled Muse.

FRAGMENT.

WEARIED, yet excited, by the interview I  
had gone through with Ancelot de Revel, I

could not rest till I had begun a letter to Valérie; but having spent a little of my spirits on paper, I was discontented with the result, and when the letter was pretty far advanced, tore it up with the intention of beginning another, after my thoughts had had some repose. It was getting dusk: I remained at my drawing-table, in the window where I had placed myself, leaning upon my elbows, thinking. The entrance of Montferrand, who walked in, as he generally did without ceremony, hardly caused me to move. I thought, as he took up the copy that I had finished of his painting, how I wished that Heaven had sent Valérie such a lover; and how safe, how happy, and how blessed it would be to place all confidence in him, and to feel no fears, and be under no other dominion. I suppose that he was thinking of me at the same time. He had in his hand some ornament of mine, that had been thrown upon the table—I cannot remember what—

though it was probably something of cost or fashion ; for, after having examined it for a few moments in silence, he observed, while he looked in my face :

“ Vous avez le goût du luxe ? ”

I smiled mechanically : I was thinking more of him, than what he said.

He went on talking, and I drawing.

“ Poverty is a hard state,” he said, “ when it comes in contact with ideal refinement. You would not understand it.”

“ I understand it very well,” I said, “ and like it very ill.”

“ So I should have thought,” was the dry remark.

“ I know you are above such prejudices,” I rejoined, laughing. “ You would build illusions upon a foundation that really admits of none.”

“ I ! ” he said, inadvertently pushing aside the trinket he was playing with ; “ oh, you are

well aware how I look upon that question : I have no merit in not caring for wealth, to whom possessions of any kind would be a restraint and an embarrassment. When by chance I have any money, it goes to the first who needs it more than I do : and I think, if I were ever possessed of a large fortune, I should dedicate it to some great work whose results I might contemplate in my old age with pleasure."

Like all people, with whom the world is but a secondary consideration, Montferrand was so disposed to absence of mind, that I believed him to be thinking aloud, and while I felt touched by his pensive tone, I answered lightly:

"What a melancholy error—to sacrifice the enjoyment of youth to the pleasures of an uncertain old age!"

"It would be no sacrifice," he replied, "therefore no error. To you, the abnegation of fortune would be a struggle,—for it is necessary to your existence."

"Then I ought to die?"

He smiled, with a sort of contemplative irony.

"You talk as if you knew what you owed to yourself. You *have* better than wealth: and fortune, therefore, seems to you but an accessory—a habit—a circumstance—which you have a right to despise, while it sets off the rest. But there comes a time, when the graces and attractions that surpass the power of wealth fall from us all; then, money masks the decline of these, and replaces lost illusions with new ones."

"Observations like these are inapplicable to me, who have learnt to give up illusions of all kinds. Do you know any one who sifts and dissects reality as I do? and who, like me, dreads of all things, not to be deceived, but to deceive herself?"

"To know is tempting," he answered, "but to act is wearying. A woman who leaves the world to take up with the fate of a man whose



opinions are opposed to it, and whose circumstances admit neither of its pleasures nor its ease, would think more of their loss, than she did before of their enjoyment."

To this remark I answered, with that thoughtless impatience which sometimes leads us in conversation to adduce a general rule, unmindful of being ourselves its exception :

"Marriage is voluntary in these days. And, alas for us ! a woman must marry, not only the circumstances of her husband, but his faults, his foibles, his errors. What are you thinking of?" I added, in an altered tone ; he looked so grave.

"That mine would frighten you, Diana."

I had been tracing heads on the margin of my drawing-board, while carelessly pursuing the conversation ; and was so unprepared for its taking this serious turn, that I drew back as frightened and ashamed, as if I had been detected in doing something wicked ; indeed,



my conscience did not well acquit me. He went on in a hurried, earnest tone :

“ Diana, can you accept the difficulties of which I speak?—Do you admit the reception of such a love as I have to offer?—Do you understand what it means ?”

He paused for some sign of acquiescence, but I gave none.

“ This can't be new to you : there is an union in our thoughts, that sagacity alone could not teach, or explanation perfect ;—not merit itself enforce. And yet you are silent !—and for my part, I feel there's something (I know not what) that keeps your fate and mine asunder. You tremble, Diana : you had better say the worst—it can't go on so any longer.”

The echo of his voice still vibrates on my heart, though the words look tame and lifeless from which the breath of passion has fled.

I tried to answer them, and could not. What I must have said made me hate myself :

and what I was fain to say would have been worse. I shrank to the farthest end of the sofa, and clasped my hands to my head, as if I could gain help there. I dreaded—oh! how I dreaded—to find myself folded in his arms, and to be unable to give him up!

Montferrand seemed confounded by my action, and yet more by my silence: all must indeed have appeared unlike what he would have expected from me; yet still, no doubt, unwilling to impute anything unfavourably to my candour, he resumed, after an instant:

“I know mine is a frightful destiny to share, and, perhaps, I ought not to be surprised at its having terrified your imagination. You see,” he added, with increasing constraint, “that I shall never understand the rules of feminine education. I have alarmed—perhaps offended you.”

“You know me well enough,” I said, though I did not dare to look up, “to feel certain that

you are giving me pain. Do not make us both more miserable than need be !”

“ This is what a woman would say !” he murmured in his teeth.

By an involuntary impulse, I raised my eyes, and asked,

“ Did I ever say what I did not feel ?”

“ I think not, Diana,” he returned ; “ I do not believe you ever did. But I love you, and I cannot see you as you are. I may have thought, have fancied, have conjured up a thousand hopes that had no sense ; fed them out of my own heart, and thought they came from yours. Oh ! no ; in you there is no deceit. Say so, Diana ; say it again !”

He would then have seized my hands, but my arms were folded close, and I remained only supported by the wall, where I leant looking at him. Yes ! I never can forget the power from his eyes that transfixed me ; and I have since wondered what

kind of terror and despair mine must have revealed before they fell beneath his gaze.

“ No,” he rejoined, more calmly ; “ it is not that in your hesitation I could suppose regret for the vanities and pastimes of the world ; I know you better than that. I feel that at your age, Diana, life is a long venture, and you may fear to trust it to a man unlike all that you have known ; one who accepts all risks, and, as he tells you, counts nothing a sacrifice to his opinions ; in whose companionship you must encounter strange climates, strange scenes, and find no other support than he can give you in his adoration,—you, who talk of courage !”


“ Mine,” said I, in a voice that would have been inaudible except to him, “ has been long tried, and has not failed me yet. God knows, at this hour I were lost without it.”

“ And yet you dare not trust yourself to me ?”

" I dare—I could,"—I choked between each word. " And yet," I resumed, with an indescribable effort, " why should you ask this now? Why interrupt the peace of our existence with plans and decisions whose fulfilment must be uncertain? We are happy now; the present is in our own power; the future cannot—may never be so."

He got up from his chair, stood quite still, and said, sternly and stiffly,

" You are not clear, Diana. Listen to me," he resumed, after a pause. " We have known each other now some time. When first we met, I beheld you but as one of those apparitions in my path, who, made for the adornment of some gala existence, claim a transient and ephemeral homage of all who come in their way, and never see them more. We grew acquainted; how, I scarcely know. It was never my intention; but then I recognized in you those qualities of energy, intelligence, and ten-




derness, that might have made me for the first time a woman's slave. I will not be your slave—it is against my creed. I wish to share with you the joys, the cares, the griefs of life, and soften these. What is it that you ask of *me*? We are wasting life; and you call it happiness to trifle and to play with mine.”

“It would never have occurred to me that you could so qualify the time we have spent together.”

“And what could it be to me, devoid of association with the future?”

“Oh! let us take the little good life gives, and banish from our hearts that there can be a morrow; for that's a thought that dashes every thing: its fears, its trials, once admitted, peace is at an end.”

I felt, as these words escaped me, that all the faculties of Montferrand's soul were in his eyes, and fixed in scrutinizing inquiry upon my face.



"You take it so deeply as that?" he returned, in a slow, meditative tone. "Is there some influence that teaches you to think in this way? Some influence, against which I have no right of reclamation? I am not acquainted with your father, and I did not know —"

"I cannot see or consult my father," I interrupted.

"I should regret to think you could be afraid of Madame Clécy."

"No, *that* I cannot. Madame Clécy may annoy and distress me sometimes; she could never make me afraid of her."

I did not consider, as I cleared away the obstacles that rose to Montferrand's imagination, how defenceless I made myself,—to what constructions I left my future conduct.

"It is true, Diana," he rejoined, after some reflection, during which I had felt too much discouraged to offer another word, "that a wandering life, such as I have traced out, and am bound to follow, includes privations well

calculated to daunt the resolution of one tenderly brought up, and luxuriously surrounded. I know they are of all kinds, inevitable and unproved, even to the material exigencies of thirst and hunger. These are rude annoyances; and, broken into such a rough existence, I feel only excitement, in what might be to a woman the extremity of hardship. It is but fair to acknowledge," he rejoined, "that not only the purity of your complexion; and your voice, so clear, so fresh, might suffer from the poisonous night-dews, or the rays of a desert sun. But both the frame and spirits might give way. I have no fixed abode, and when the choice of our course is impelled by the interest of the moment or the ardour of adventure, we are forced to simplify the accessories of life. Where we arrive one day, the morrow we are no longer to be found. To the welcome we ask, succeeds a quick farewell. Our home is every where, for we



must carry it in our hearts. Besides, we journey far at a time, and we ride armed, and ready for attack. The woman who shared my lot must be in her saddle by break of day; she must neither fear to track a forest, or ford a river by moonlight; and her tender limbs, when unnerved by fatigue, would at times find no better place of rest than a tent under the stars, and a cloak for a pillow."

He ceased speaking here, or at some such point in his recital; for it would be impossible more definitely to recal the details he then set before me of his chosen existence. He might have gone on for ever, and I have listened. Excited by the picture he drew of that life of spirit, adventure, and of love, so different from mine, I had lost sight of the danger there is in dwelling upon a forbidden theme.

Enthralled with the subject that had at first so startled me, opposing circumstances began to fade into fainter colours; long recognized obli-

gations gave way ; nothing could weigh against what he said ; and *I* only hesitated when *he* paused, because the words at my heart were those of Donna Sol to the Outlaw, "I'll follow you."

I know not what sustained me : we are so often supported in the hour of trial, that we know not how we are supported ; and lest we should glory in our virtue, sometimes our very faults bar up the access of temptation. The slight inflexion of sarcasm in Montferrand's speech ; the railery of a man who asks if he has relied too much upon you, perhaps touched my pride.

And yet I felt for him as much as for myself. I felt that I, who would have given my happiness for his, had tried him hard ; and when, ending as I did, by merely attempting to say what would calm his spirits, I thought to do the best for both. I did not understand my circumstances ; I really did not feel sure of my doom ; I had no power openly to declare what my thoughts sickened at in secret—that

we must part for ever ; and so with a somewhat forced accent of hope I replied,

“ Were I indeed unwilling to face the reality of that life you have depicted ; were it in fact unsuited to my spirit and to my fancy, it is too late to tell you that I would not venture upon it for you ! Stop,—let me go on.”

What a martyrdom it was to me to discern the changes of his countenance, as I spoke.

“ I must have time to judge how far my powers are equal to my wishes ; it would not do for either of us, that I should encounter the reality upon the strength of ideal or even heartfelt enthusiasm ; and not be able to sustain it as I hope, and you would expect. Fix me a day for my decision. When must you go ?”

“ In a few weeks,—a month.”

“ Well then, ten days, a fortnight hence ; don’t speak of it till then. You know that, for the sake of both, I must not be persuaded.”

Again he seemed to interrogate the inmost

recesses of my heart: there was a kind of compassionate consideration beneath his scrutiny, for he saw that I suffered; but how strange, how poor a creature, he must have thought me through the whole scene.

He said in a lower tone,

"Diana, I have set forth things very roughly. I thought it right—I feared so to delude you. But had I need to talk of the protection of my tenderness! No; your heart, better than any other, must know the power of devotion, and understand that for the object of it, there may be privation, but no danger."

"Juste, you will let nothing that can happen in this world, prevent the meeting you have promised me."

"Why, what should happen? What, in the name of heaven, can you expect or think?"

"Oh, nothing—I can't tell. I am sick, confused. I wish to have your word."

"'Tis pledged, Diana." We joined hands. I

know not what it seemed to him : to me, this was a kind of perjury, and scarcely sealed, when an outer door was heard to open.

I sat down again, and said : "There's Madame Clécy come to look for me."

Somebody did indeed come in immediately after ; and being under the impression of feelings that fitted me very little for talking, their entrance caused me to make the greater haste. I cannot tell what traces my countenance might have borne of what had passed ; but I do know that when I heard a man's step at the other side of the table, and instead of Madame Clécy's voice, that of Lismore, I felt the blood rush to the veins of my temples, and to the roots of my hair ; and I know my face was crimson, for I could see the tinge of confusion at my fingers' ends. His countenance, or that of Juste, I could not see, nor had I ease of mind enough to attend to them. It was an unusual hour for Lismore's visit ; and without

raising my head, I commanded myself enough to ask if he wished to see Madame Clécy ; to which he replied in a marked inexplicable manner such as he had never used before :

“ I came to thank the Marshal for the place he has sent me for the Italian Opera, and to beg that you will come with him to-night.”

Sometimes the exigency of the moment shows us how we ought to act. I felt startled by his tone, but nothing could add to my embarrassment, and I was able to say, “ Oh, certainly : if it will give you pleasure.”

Then there was a short pause, and before I could speak again, I heard the room door close upon Juste Montferrand.

Lismore did not sit down ; and under the pretext of dressing for dinner, I tied up my portfolio, and retreated also.

## CHAPTER XV.

L'inquiétude est le plus grand mal qui arrive en l'âme excepté le péché.

ST. FRANÇOIS DE SALES.

I CANNOT now conceive how I got through the interval of suspense that succeeded the scene related in the last chapter.

I remember all that evening. It was a very long one: something in my heart lifted me above its realities at the time, and yet left them quite clear upon my memory: they were associated with a state of feeling unlike anything I had ever known—better than anything I was ever to know again. I saw those about me

who had more power over me than I could have over my own fate ; those who importuned, those who distressed—who disliked me ; I saw doubt and darkness before me—but for a few hours the echo of Juste Montferrand's words, was still whispering at my heart, and I could listen to nothing else. The opera was Cimarosa's "*Matrimonio Segreto*:" it was so unexciting and old-fashioned, I had an excuse for not attending ; and its light quiet orthodox orchestra swept kindly and soothingly above my thoughts, as when one talks confidentially beside a murmuring stream. Nobody appeared to pay much attention to me. Montferrand came in, but for a quarter of an hour ; I thought he was right not to stay longer.

The house was well filled that night ; and I could perfectly distinguish in the pit the youth whom, from the night that he had been pointed out to me, (that of Lismore's apparition), I had never failed to perceive occupying the same place ; though he had on no occasion thrown



himself in our way, either at entering or leaving the theatre. Latterly, I had been able to perceive that his appearance was improved: he seemed to have newer clothes, to keep his hair smooth, and wear gloves. This evening, it was to my surprise Mr. Lismore, who drew my attention to him, saying:

“I have a most musical secretary: that young man, who is in my service during the day, never seems to lose an occasion of attending the Opera.”

On finding who was the person alluded to, I could not help asking, since when he had belonged to him, and by whom he had been recommended.

He readily answered, that soon after his return to Paris, he had looked out for a young man of intelligence and decent education, to write letters of business for him, and that he had engaged this one at the recommendation of the director of the orchestra, who had taken a fancy to the lad from the correctness of his

musical ear, and was endeavouring to place him where his abilities might be made useful.

From a few more carelessly expressed questions, I learnt that Lismore knew nothing of the antecedents of this boy ; but was taught to believe they were wretched, and that he had been the means of rescuing a well-disposed youth from the evil consequences of misery, and bad companionship.

I learnt further, that Lismore himself had been more than ordinarily impressed in favour of this stranger, who appeared to have the power of ingratiating himself with his employers. Lismore said, he had given proofs of peculiar resolution of character, industry, and quickness, in overcoming the disadvantages of his circumstances. I found he had shown so strong a desire to enter Lismore's service, that he had refused the offer of a musical education at the Conservatoire, and had in a miraculously short time overcome the deficiencies

which had threatened to destroy his hopes of the situation. This had evidently won the heart of his master : no man was more susceptible of being biassed by flattery, or led by dependants than Lismore.

The opera being over, I was taken to the hotel where Mr. and Mrs. Tyrawley lodged, to whom I had promised a farewell visit, their departure having been settled for the next day. Mr. Tyrawley had managed to find his way home from the Passage du Panorama, very easily—he told us—but not how. I found with them, on entering, the little boy Johnny, for whom they had already looked out a school, where they intended to leave him ; and while Mr. Tyrawley was indulging his personal satisfaction at the idea of himself quitting so speedily the “ uncivilized ” capital of France, I endeavoured to recal to the child, that we had once been friends. The interest of the meeting was, however, wholly on my side.

He could not recognize my identity, though the young lady at Catherlugh, he said, he had not forgotten.

He was now nearly nine years old, more than double the age at which I had seen him last : he looked less sickly, but his growth had progressed very slowly : he would not have been guessed to be more than seven, and struck me as equally infantine in his manners and speech. I had always retained an affectionate interest in this orphan child. The sympathy his father had shown in my mother's adversity, the approximation of their deaths, and the regret she had expressed at being unable to fulfil the wishes of her friend concerning him, seemed to have left a bond between us ; and I sincerely regretted that my own helpless condition of life prevented me from furthering intentions, which she would scrupulously have performed. I mention these sensations, not because I owe to them the renewal of an intercourse which has procured

me a valued friend, for that would lead to a period beyond the scope of this narrative ; but because the renewal of Johnny's connexion with my family was indeed soon to be marked by circumstances of some peculiarity. To wave these, however, for the present. I had turned in my mind the possibility of his paying a visit under the Marshal's roof ; and upon the consideration that we should move to some country-house for the hot weather, had already asked leave to have the society of Johnny there. This had induced the Marshal to insist on my bringing him back with me that night, preparatory to his being installed amongst strangers, which I now took upon me to propose.

Mr. Tyrawley consented with a little pompous hesitation, exacting of me that no ideas should be instilled into him that would unfit him for earning his own living, "as he could not take the bread out of the mouths of *his* children to support another."

And Mrs. Tyrawley assured me that she had tried him a year ago 'at Catherlugh for six whole weeks, in which it was not possible to say, what Johnny had made them suffer. He actually seemed to consider the house as his own, and to look upon them all as usurpers—treated her children, all five of them, precisely as if they had taken his place ; and appealed to her—yes, positively to her—against their encroachments !

Pitying Johnny in my heart for all he must have suffered, during those six weeks he had so acted the tyrant, in what was once his father's house, and wondering whether his infantile memory had there mourned the days when he had been so lovingly nursed and coddled ; and whether the spirit of Catherlugh had looked down on the child of his old age, learning life within the walls, where his fondness had so ill-prepared him for its experience, I took leave of the Tyrawleys and wished them well. Then

taking Johnny's hand—which certainly did not feel as if it were destined for manual labour—we departed together.

When I awoke the next morning, I felt glad the Tyrawleys were gone, and yet the hum and movement of society was at this moment necessary to me. I could do nothing for myself: at home I could but grieve; and such was the mobility of my fancy or spirits, that when in the world, I seldom knew what I really felt—perhaps that is why we most of us unconsciously act a part there. The crowd and bustle of mankind affects us magnetically: it hurries the senses, it distracts the attention; it gives lightness for courage, eagerness for steadiness, apathy for resolution, and fever for strength; it generally rocked me asleep for the moment to all my difficulties, though inwardly I hated its spell.

Possibly my confidence in fate and in the generosity of others was always too careless. I

do not say this in order to lower the qualities of a man to whom I was fatal, more even than he was to me ; but because I feel I did not in my calculations for his conduct estimate sufficiently the power of interests over him, that having little weight with myself, I supposed easily disregarded by others.

Before I had written the letter I had meditated to Valérie, we heard of her return. She wrote from her husband's château in the south of France ; they had from some reason or another shortened their stay in Italy, and intended passing the summer at —— which had been newly embellished for their reception. This letter spared me the task of reciting my interview with Monsieur de Revel ; for his military duties had carried him into that department, and the post he held was in the immediate neighbourhood of ——.

Valérie had already seen him. She did not enter into minute details, but her letter indicated



that she considered him to have been unfairly used, and affirmed—though it was useless to enter upon circumstances never to be repaired, and that had given so much pain to both—that she had made a point of his reception at her house, as the only justice now in her power.


“I had some difficulty,” added Valérie, “in obtaining this point; but I have made many sacrifices to Monsieur de San Maglori, whose tastes but little coincide with mine; and I would not add to them, that of appearing to visit on an innocent person an offence from which he is wholly exculpated; or, by rejecting the society of a friend, add an outrage to his feelings, whom I had already too hastily condemned.”

It pained me to hear that Valérie should have fixed upon Monsieur de Revel for a subject of opposition to her husband's wishes; but I could not tell her in a letter these feelings, nor had her account been sufficiently explicit to warrant any observations in reply.

The weather in May was this year unusually oppressive, and as neither the Marshal nor Madame Clécy liked being long away from Paris, they took advantage of a large house being then to let at St. Cloud, and hired it upon trial for the summer. It stood upon that fine rising ground that is bounded by the river Seine, and was within five minutes' walk from the gates of the palace. The house and gardens were as gay as they were spacious: a broad terrace to the front led by steps to the lawn—or what in England would have been a lawn—here intersected with parterres and walks, and adorned with statues. A long range of apartments looked out upon the terrace, and they ended on either side with a small square room, whose windows opened from the sides of the house upon avenues of limes, one to the right, the other to the left. The Maréchale's apartment, on the first floor, included a similar

room ; and she allowed me the use of the one underneath it, in the western wing, for my morning occupations.

The removal to this house closed the first week of my suspense, and as the second leads to a more decisive point, I must first describe how everything stood with me at this time. It may appear that to have come to an explanation with Lismore would have been easy, had I favoured such opportunities, and wiser than the lingering agony I was forced to sustain ; but it was not so—I was no less accessible than I had been till now. He was, if possible, more guarded. Over every pursuit and allotment of my time he now maintained a vigilant though indescribable superintendence ; and every day this power had upon me a more numbing and paralyzing effect :—“ he watched me tame.” I do not think that anybody I knew, excepting Juste Montferrand, entertained a doubt of his future



*right* to control my actions, or of their being now subject to his influence; and yet it was impossible to say from whence the conclusion had been drawn.

I only know that an apartment was prepared for him at the Villa of St. Cloud, and that he took immediate possession of it, on the plea of a visit, when we went there.

He brought with him the young man, his secretary, and introduced him by the name of Ignace l'Etoile. Montferrand hardly passed a day without coming to us; and though I tried to keep up my spirits while he was near, I felt that they betrayed a gradual sinking. He said nothing, however, of his departure, and did not refer to that promised and dreaded moment of explanation, now near at hand. His silence was a relief. I had his promise, and knew that he would not leave me unheard. Every day was like a gain. I saw that he suffered; but strange

to say, *my* suffering made me stupid, and, as it were, insensible to *his* : I was so taken up with the threads in which my own fate was involved, that I could not pity his uncertainty—I only desired his patience.

During this suspense, I had been glad of the interest of attending to Johnny—it took me out of my own thoughts. I was now momentarily deprived of this little recreation : his introduction to his school could no longer be delayed, and he was separated from me with some affliction, but I am sorry to add, with still more regret from the companionship of the stablemen and other retainers, who contributed for him to the enjoyment of rural life.

It happened at this time that Lismore had some legal affair to transact for my father : it related to debts that were to be paid out of the fortune left him by his brother, Bertin St. Sauveur, and required not only a reference to some letters

from his late brother, which had been in my mother's possession, but also that the same documents should be copied out, and sent to him in Canada ; and as my mother had made over to me all these things at her death, it devolved on me to furnish, and consequently to find, the deeds in question.

Lismore first spoke to me on the subject. It is probable that, under other circumstances, I should have mentioned to Madame Clécy (the joint inheritor with my father of the property) what he wished to have done. At this time, her total disregard of my interests and concerns left me such rare opportunities of seeing her in private, as prevented my ever alluding to the subject.

The room where Lismore employed his secretary, was at the back of my sitting-room. The partition was very thin, and though the door between the two rooms, not being in use, was

bolted and locked, the interstice allowed the hum of people in conversation, and their steps to be heard. As I had never distinguished a word that was said, I did not think of warning Lismore of a circumstance that must, indeed, have been equally apparent to him; nor when he entered into the details of this business, did I heed the vicinity. The less should I have thought of doing so, for two reasons: one being that it was a common and obvious law question, containing no mystery; the other, that he, at the first moment of discussion, had said:

“Ignace shall copy these out for us as soon as they are sorted, and we shall have discovered which of them are essential to the elucidation of the point. I send him to see my lawyer in Paris to-day, and he will bring me word what information is requisite. If you have no objection, he shall come here with me

of a morning, and copy these papers under your eye."

I had no valid objection to allege, and so I made none; but I felt a great repugnance to the idea of being brought into connexion with Lismore's secretary, whom I had tried to avoid, all through the week he had passed in our house. He was there on that kind of footing which belonged neither to the society nor the household: he dined alone, he never came into the drawing-room, but only because he did not care to avail himself of the Marshal's invitation; and he occasionally had joined us in walking or other excursions. He had gained in his new post an appearance of gentility, easily attainable to a quick intelligence, and he had a slight figure more adapted by its symmetry for activity and grace than were many of those who had been born and bred in a higher station. The squalid and eager look of half-starved recklessness that I had first



noticed in him, was now replaced by a more healthy, yet still pale, smooth complexion ; and in spite of the effeminate lines of his features, by an expression of quiet and collective daring, which he supported with a manner almost, though passively, offensive.

I enter into these little details of description in order to justify a reluctance that might otherwise appear too punctilious. To the Marshal, full of kindness and amenity to all around him, and of an age and state where condescension could not be encroached upon, his tacit kind of presumption was unobservable. With Madame Clécy—for whom I had remarked that any show of resolution, of what kind it might be, and however out of place, was a claim—it made the youth's best security for being civilly treated : she would, perhaps, not have afforded him, but for this circumstance, a sign of attention. But whether or not intimidated by the deter-

mination of his looks, I heard her frequently offer him a seat (sometimes by my side), and as often address him as "Monsieur." To Lismore, his off-hand self-possession was actually grateful: he appeared to consider the *disinvoltura* of this young man as a comedy of daily life acted for his particular entertainment. It was something so surpassingly original—so absurdly new, to meet with such a character;—a creature of that age having climbed from the very dregs of society, so perfectly at his ease—surprised at nothing, afraid of nobody; an order of talent and sagacity of the highest kind—in fact, invaluable.

To me who had, indeed, been able to discern the depths from whence this youth had risen, the result was as inexplicable as to Lismore, yet far from appearing such a subject of amusement; nor was I at liberty to view him as impartially as others did.

For the Marshal, for Madame Clécy, for his

patron, he was a gratuitous object of interest or compassion ; but while he never infringed upon the common show of respect and consideration that was their due, he seemed to regard me in the light of an old acquaintance. He had introduced himself to me from the top of his lamp-post ; he had escorted me from the theatre and had refused to be paid—true ; but I could never understand why these unfortunate chances were to be made the basis of a fellowship as uncongenial as uncalled for. Where every body had their place defined, I had never before thought of guarding my own by any distinction of manner, and should have found it painful to do so ; but it was impossible not to mark that some line of separation existed between me and one who looked and spoke as if he not only did not understand, but was determined not to admit that distinction. This was the cause of my disinclination for his assistance ; but there was nothing to say about

it, and I found myself compelled to pass two or three hours, upon a few successive mornings, in referring to writings and investigating their import with Lismore and his secretary.

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